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ABSTRACT

This book addresses issues related to meeting the language and learning needs of low socioeconomic status (LSES) students so they achieve as well as middle socioeconomic status (MSES) students. Chapter 1, "What's Going On? discusses differences between LSES and MSES children that cause LSES children to fail and MSES children to succeed in school; what is needed to compensate for this difference; and how schools can provide what is needed. Chapter 2, "If It's So Important, Why Didn't I Know about It before This?" discusses the politics and timing of information, the development and essence of language information, the stages of language development, and the language of the LSES child. Chapter 3, "What Can I Do about This?" focuses on preparing for success (e.g., increasing teacher-child interactions and child-child conversations, scaffolding comprehension and expression, and inviting child initiative). Chapter 4, "What is CurricuLanguage?" describes CurricuLanguage (a theory of the relationship between poverty, language, and school success), explains language information load (LIL) and language information structure (LIS), and explains CurricuLanguage levels, use, and projects. Chapter 5, "Why Talk about This Now?" discusses positive and negative uses of accountability. (Contains 104 references.) (SM)

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Preparing for Success

Meeting the Language and Learning Needs of Young Children from Poverty Homes

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For my father, Henry Julius Tschirner

A gentle man of intelligence and humor
who respected education, loved learning
and knew the difference

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About the Author

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President, Syndactics, Inc.

Dr. Lyn Weiner earned an M.A. in speech pathology from the University of Iowa in 1970, the national speech pathology certification in 1971, and an Ed.D. degree from Arizona State University in 1994. Starting as a public school speech pathologist, she became supervisor, then director of the Arizona State University Speech and Hearing Clinic, where she taught classes in diagnostic procedures, test battery development, and test results interpretation.

She has written more than 25 books and materials for use in educational settings, four of which have been Main Selections for the Library of Speech-Language Pathology. In 1984, her book *How to Use Reproducible Illustrations in Language Remediation* was named as one of the top ten books on child language. From 1984 to 1991 she published the *Syndactics Bulletin*, a monthly newsletter on child language and educational success; headed the diagnostics team for the Arizona Migrant Head Start; researched and co-wrote an innovative literacy kindergarten curriculum (K-TALK and K-READ); and (with Dysart Migrant Preschool Director Betty Churchill) designed and implemented the award-winning Dysart preschool program.

In 1995, as an outgrowth of doctoral research on neural network-based applications to school finance, she developed a methodology for assigning a level of educational need to disparate educational units. This method was adopted by the New Mexico Department of Education for providing additional funding to needier school districts. Subsequently, Dr. Weiner served on a four-person national consulting team responsible for implementing the New Mexico educational accountability legislation.

Currently, Dr. Weiner combines skills and interests in the related areas of curriculum, computer-assisted data analysis, and educationally based language requirements in order to head and evaluate projects designed to enhance educational growth and opportunities for young children at risk of educational failure. The recently published assessment *Pre-K Success*® and her current book *Preparing for Success* exemplify her concern for provision of quality child information and her regard for young children as unique learners with exciting potential for success.

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Preface

My aunt had a wily house cat who dealt with the arrival of a new toy poodle puppy by leading it into the woods and losing it there. Daily. This hapless young canine's morning schedule of events clicked away with the regularity of a metronome: Eat breakfast. See cat. Follow cat. Get lost. Whine and cry. Wait to be found.

Watching this sequence unfold, one wondered at the conceptual captivity that relentlessly maintained the poodle's complicit behavior. It was not, after all, carried or dragged into the woods: each day it willingly pursued the waving tail into oblivion.

This cat and poodle puppy come to mind when I think about the process of educating young children from poverty homes. In both cases, there is a repeated participation in a process that leads to an undesirable end. Over the past twenty years the instructional procedures in place to teach young children from poverty homes have been largely unsuccessful. Yet, this process remains basically unaltered: teachers attempt to teach by sharing new information in large groups, by verbally explaining concepts, and by asking questions to which children do not have the answers.

Over the same twenty years, a growing body of information has offered quite clear specifications of what young children from poverty homes need. In order to learn, they require:

- Real-world experiences with real-world objects.
- Meaningful tasks.
- Conversation opportunities.
- Opportunities to make activity-based discoveries.
- Individualized pursuits that allow the child to engage in learning.

Instead, the curricula available for these children lead to:

- Artificial activities with abstract drawings.
- Contrived tasks.
- Admonitions to remain silent.
- Requests to parrot back unconnected pieces of information.
- Whole group sessions which encourage all but the most able of children to tune out.

The latter conditions, inimical to learning, are better geared to a demonstration that learning has already taken place. While children from more privileged homes are able to bear up under the demands posed by these conditions, the children from poverty homes stumble from the first day. So, schools offer experiences that are known to not work, and they don't work. And the next year they offer the same experiences, and they don't work that year either. And so on. Like the young poodle, they persist in repeating behavior that experience has shown will lead to an undesirable end.

This book was written to try to keep the poodle out of the woods, to offer an alternative set of behaviors for interacting with young children from poverty homes, and to provide a rationale for doing so. With that goal in mind, some decisions about the format were made.

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First, since this book was written primarily for working teachers and their administrators, it was designed to offer a comfortable reading experience. The first chapter summarizes the main points. Supporting research and other citations are included in subsequent chapters when each point is discussed.

Second, the book was kept short enough to allow it to be read within a few hours. This required some severe parsing of the wealth of information about language and education. Although the goal was to cite each of the major contributors at least once, the quality and breadth of work in this area is not well represented. Readers are especially urged to seek out books by Gordon Wells, Marion Blank, Catherine Snow and Joan Tough in order to better comprehend the important language/learning intersections and the impact of classroom activities on development.

Last, I chose to let my own emotions and frustrations show through. For those who feel themselves the target of those frustrations, I apologize for any discomfort caused. My goal was to join with those readers who have themselves experienced these same frustrations and a sense of waste that young lives with so much promise should be so quickly daunted by a system that should know better (and there is that frustration showing through).

So, read, enjoy, reflect and act—ideally in that sequence.

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This 20-year trip was kept in motion with energy and support from a diversity of talented individuals. First and special thanks go to Judy Creighton and Teresa Lyons Jordan, K-TALK co-authors and early collaborators. Thanks also to Patti Hartmann and Connie Brown at Communication Skill Builders who early recognized the promise of the K-TALK kit and worked to help it meet its potential. And a warm thanks to Ron Weintraub, president of Communication Skill Builders, who was always there for his authors and whose skill in asking questions helped to shape awareness of the issues.

At Dysart School District, six people helped to fulfill the early promise made by the K-TALK materials. Betty Churchill, as administrator, ordered the kits and training, Grace Rosalez Davis made pure language magic in her kindergarten class, Pat Cook carried the ideas to other grades, Principal Fernando de la Osa requested similar interactions for all grades, Marilyn Sanchez shared what she saw when she went to Creighton School District, and Bilingual Director Deb Mason Drysdale declared K-TALK the best material she had ever seen for building skills in Spanish and in English. The memories of their enthusiasm filled the long cold days when our data were discounted and the child glee in learning was ignored.

Thanks also go to the educational professionals and their supporters whose interest and comments let me know that it was time to write this book. In South Carolina, Linda Mims and Floyd Creech exemplified the highest level of commitment to children from poverty homes and responded to my information by asking what there was that they could read. Allen Thames celebrated educational achievement at a special level. He hosted an elegant gathering of innovative educators in his spacious Columbia home and invited us to share our thoughts and successes. That collaboration of wealth, education and concern left a lasting impression.

Unrelenting gratitude go to Bobbi Kurn, Charlann Simon, Mary Jane Green and Peggy Martin-Bunting for their long-time friendship and life-changing interactions. All speech-language pathologists, all had a vision of what role language could and must serve in educational settings. Bobbi got things started with her insistence that Ron Weintraub and I meet, Charlann bravely led the way to the language/education intersection with her *Communicative Competence* and subsequent publications. Mary Jane inspired action with tales from the front line. Peggy simply never let go of her dream of seeing ALL children thrive in school and worked with each piece in turn—me, administrators, teachers, parents—to get us to perform as required.

Many thanks to friends and colleagues Susan Sawyer Robbins, Patty Finnegan and Teresa Jordan who operationalized their support by reading the first draft and recommending changes. Final thanks to my husband Art and my friend and publisher Karyn Mullica. Both have been an inescapable part of the process from the beginning and have not wavered in their commitment to offer what was needed to see this project through.

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The true discrimination that comes out of poverty is the lack of cognitive strategies. The lack of these unseen attributes handicaps in every aspect of life the individual who does not have them.

—Ruby Payne

And yet, despite all the axioms of our language, and those from other cultures around the world, despite research within our own educational community, despite the brain research..., despite our direct experience as parents, education continues to cling to the tradition of telling as the primary medium to convey knowledge.

—Susan Kovalik

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CHAPTER 1

What's going on?

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Current Status

What difference between LSES children and MSES children causes LSES children to fail and MSES children to succeed in school?

The role of pragmatics in education

Language Information Structure (LIS) and Language Information Load (LIL)

The difference between LSES children and MSES children is the frequency of the match between the classroom LIL and the student LIS

What is needed to compensate for this difference so that LSES children can perform as well as MSES children?

How can schools provide what is needed?

The current status is frequently a high level of mismatch between the student LIS and the classroom LIL for young children from poverty homes

Removing teacher input from the early childhood education process can result in "The Emperor's New Curriculum"

Early childhood curricular decisions may be made by individuals with expertise in higher elementary grades or in secondary education

In a district with schools ranging from high SES to low SES, the LIL of the district-wide curriculum, activities and materials most closely matches the LIS of the high SES students

In order to identify a mismatch between the classroom LIL and the student LIS, it is necessary to acknowledge that it may exist

A mismatch between classroom LIL and student LIS can be documented in a variety of ways

After the mismatch is identified, schools need to provide Pre-K – 2 teachers with the information, resources, materials and support required in order to match the classroom LIL with the student LIS

In response to appropriate LIL instruction, children will continue to develop their LIS

The gains that young children make in developing their LIS become part of their permanent educational legacy

Current Status

Right now, education of children from poverty homes is a hot topic. Children who do not succeed in the school setting are often predisposed to social failure. They drop out of school, take unstable minimum-wage jobs, drift, require tax-supported programs to meet basic daily needs, and send their own children to school lacking the skills for success. Children who are successfully educated go on to jobs that require specific skills, become stable salary-earners and tax payers, and send their own children to school "ready to learn." Policy makers understanding the impact of education acknowledge the role of government education expenses as an investment in our economic future.

If school is a good investment, more school and earlier school is an even better investment. Increasing numbers of states are providing preschool for children from poverty (low socio-economic status) homes and expanding existing early childhood programs.

A wise investor expects to see a return on the dollars invested. This concept, translated to educational policy, results in increased accountability-based legislation. A strong message is clearly being delivered: show results or suffer the consequences.

The results being shown today are pretty much the same as those reported by Coleman, et al. (1966): Children from middle to high income homes with educated parents do well in school; children from poverty homes with uneducated parents do poorly. This poor performance of poverty children is apparently in evidence from their first day in school and stays visible until they leave. The main thing that has changed in the past three decades is that there is now an increased focus on this issue. Questions are being asked. Requests for answers have become demands, and the demands not met have invited punitive actions that range from loss of funds to loss of school autonomy.

These are the questions that need to be answered:

- What difference between low socio-economic status (LSES) children and middle socio-economic status (MSES) children causes LSES children to fail and MSES children to succeed in school?
- What is needed to compensate for this difference so that LSES children can perform as well as MSES children?
- How can schools provide what is needed?

The purpose of this book is to address those questions, to provide some support for the viewpoint expressed, and to offer concrete suggestions for meeting the learning needs of young children from poverty homes.

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What difference between LSES children and MSES children causes LSES children to fail and MSES children to succeed in school?

Children from MSES homes develop language at a faster rate than children from LSES

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homes. Although some teachers are aware of the differences in language skills of LSES and MSES children, they tend to describe these differences in terms of vocabulary or sentence structure. Teachers notice that children from poverty homes tend to have more restricted vocabulary and use shorter sentences than children growing up in more privileged environments. While this is true, the essential difference between LSES children and MSES children is an aspect of language that may not be as readily apparent. For school success, the most important aspect of language is pragmatics or language use.

The role of pragmatics in education

Pragmatics is one of the four major subcomponents of language:

- Vocabulary (the words in a language) is studied in the area of *semantics*.
- Grammar (the structure for putting the words together) constitutes the area of study called *syntax*.
- Articulation or speech (the sounds in a language) is related to the area of *phonology*.
- Use (what is achieved by language) is the area of *pragmatics*.

Important skills in pragmatics develop during the first five years for a child from an MSES home. What a child can do with language changes very rapidly across five levels. What also changes rapidly are the kinds of experiences children need in order to continue learning language.

- **Level 1:** Children can talk in words and phrases. They learn from listening while someone talks to them about what they are doing or seeing. Talk is mostly about objects and events in the immediate environment.
- **Level 2:** Children can carry on extended conversations with one other person. They learn from one-to-one interaction with a more advanced language user. As in Level 1, talk is mostly about objects and events in the immediate environment, but the advanced language user supports (scaffolds) the child's attempts to talk about events removed from the immediate environment.
- **Level 3:** Children can use and understand sequences of events (such as stories). They learn by talking about their own sequences of activities with a more advanced language user. The advanced language user helps the child put events in order and use words (*first, next*) that reflect that order.
- **Level 4:** Children can use language to learn about things they have not directly experienced. They can learn by talking about a variety of topics with each other and with discussion leaders. The discussion leaders help by noticing when children do not comprehend and by clarifying information.
- **Level 5:** Children can use language to build and evaluate internal verbal models of their world. This allows them to consider ideas and to reflect on thought questions. They become managers of their own learning and seek clarification when necessary.

These pragmatics skills can be thought of as constituting the child's *Language Information Structure* (LIS), the system which processes and manages the language a child encounters in the classroom. By the time most MSES children show up at kindergarten, they have a Level 4 LIS and are actively developing the Level 5 LIS they will need by Grade 2.

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This is a good thing for MSES children, because curriculum developers *expect* kindergarten children to have a Level 4 LIS. Look at the language expectations in the kindergarten curriculum on pages 6 and 7. Some of these objectives could be taught at an LIS Level of 1 or 2, but most require an LIS of Level 4 or Level 5. To meet many objectives, children need to be able to use language to talk about topics introduced in the classroom. These topics frequently are events that children may not have directly experienced. Verbs like *discuss, describe, tell* and *answer,* frequently signal Level 4 LIS requirements. Level 5 demands are signaled by words like *predict* and *explain*. The LIS requirements embedded in curricular goals or activities constitute the *Language Information Load* (LIL) of the curriculum. All curricular activities carry a specific LIL. Most of the time, the LIL is not made explicit and teachers are not aware of it. The fact that the LIL is hidden does not keep it from strongly affecting the learning that can take place.

Language Information Structure (LIS) and Language Information Load (LIL)

All classroom activities have an LIL. All children have a particular level of LIS. MSES children generally arrive at kindergarten with a Level 4 or higher LIS. LSES children frequently arrive at kindergarten with LISs ranging from Level 1 to Level 3. Under the right conditions, children can continue to increase the levels of the LIS.

When the LIL exceeds the LIS:

- Content learning is impaired.
- The level of the LIS slowly increases.

We've all had the experience of a professor who talked "over the heads" of most of the class or presenters that used too few visuals and too many words to try to get a point across. These are examples of an LIL that exceeded the LIS (in that case, our own LIS).

When the LIL is less than the LIS:

- Content learning is easier.
- Specific vocabulary may increase.
- The level of the LIS does not increase.

An instruction period during which three to four adult students look at a car motor with a skilled mechanic provides more engagement than one in which the same material is covered by lecture alone. The LIL for a hands-on, here-and-now demonstration is Level 1. Even for students with high levels of LIS, this is a pleasant way to learn. Hands-on is also an excellent way to teach new vocabulary.

When the LIL equals the LIS:

- Content learning is maximum.
- The level of the LIS rapidly increases.

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Language Expectations in the Kindergarten Curriculum

Skill	Math	Reading	Science
Compares/Classifies: Demonstrates recognition of similarities and differences by matching and grouping objects and by excluding objects not belonging to a given group.	Arranges objects in rows. Works "shape" puzzles. Groups objects on the basis of size, color, shape. Identifies smallest and largest objects. Identifies sets having more or fewer elements. Selects equivalent sets. Constructs sets of one more and one less.	Identifies own name tag. Matches shapes, letters. Groups furniture, clothing, food. Identifies and groups pictures that show name, action and location.	Sorts animals by fur and feathers. Identifies seasons. Classifies by living and nonliving, objects attracted by magnet, etc. Sorts pictures of objects by composition (wood, metal, plastic, etc.).
Names/Describes: Names attribute(s) used as the basis of classifying (color, size, shape, etc.). Uses and understands necessary vocabulary.	Uses and understands these words: *many, how many, more, more than, most, few, less, less than, least, taller than, part of, the same as, as long as, alike, different, big enough, small enough, thick, as many as, thin, all, always, couple, huge, amount, too many, several, each, enough, group, pair, not enough, larger than, big-bigger-biggest, large-larger-largest, small-smaller-smallest, little-littler-littlest, short-shorter-shortest, middle sized, long-longer-longest, tall-taller-tallest, wide-wider-widest, narrow-narrower-narrowest, far-farther-farthest.*	Uses and understands words for location, distance and direction: *up/down, near/far, short/tall, short/long, push/pull, at, in, out, on, off, inside, outside, top, bottom, over, under, above, below, in front of, in back of, behind, beside, next to, across, through, toward, between, left/right.* Names eight basic colors. Recalls two or three characters in a story. Describes relationships and location of objects or actions in pictures. Describes objects and characteristics.	Uses and understands words for quality: *hot/cold.* Names body parts, seasons, plants, objects. Gives characteristics of living and nonliving objects. Describes basic attributes of animals, leaves and flowers. Describes five senses and how they are used. Talks about similarities.
Sequences: Arranges pictures and objects in sequential order. Follows a series of directions and places events in time.	Arranges pictures in number sequence. Organizes cylinders by size. Knows which is longer—a minute or a day. Arranges numbers 1 to 10.	Sequences up to four letters. Puts three-, four- and five-part pictures in proper order. Relates an activity in proper sequence.	Arranges a simple nature sequence in proper order. Retells a simple experiment in order.
Follows/Gives Directions: Carries out two- and three-stage commands. Requests action of others. Uses basic concepts in listening and talking.	Follows and gives directions based on number and size. Counts out the number of objects requested. Gives the largest or smallest object on request.	Gives instructions for getting places in school, conducting a simple magic trick, or making something.	Follows three-part instruction for science activity.

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Skill	Math	Reading	Science
Asks/Answers Questions: Provides the information requested. Asks questions to get information.	Answers questions such as: *Which glass has more/less water? Are there more/fewer balls or more/fewer blocks? How many books are there? How many more pencils are there than crayons?*	Remembers details. Answers questions such as: *What happened first/ last? What comes next? What letter comes after ____?* Answers questions starting with *Who, What, Where* and *When.*	Answers questions based on content material: *What happens to a caterpillar after it makes a cocoon?* etc. Asks about observed events.
Talks with Others: Uses sentences of five and six words. Conveys information to others, and restates information when listener doesn't understand.	Uses number concepts when relating daily activities.	Relates own experiences compared to those in a story. Reacts to story's moods. Participates in group discussions.	Works with two other children on a science project. Reports outcome to other class members.
Uses Mental Images: Creates mental image based on information from speaker. Uses images to respond to questions about stories and other verbal information.	Solves simple story problems.	Uses flannelboard pictures to make up a story for another classmate. Can answer questions about a story after hearing it read. Dictates stories.	Understands information about how things function after hearing an explanation.
Hypothesizes: Makes predictions concerning outcomes of stories, experiments, math problems and behaviors.	Makes predictions about more/less. Predicts lapses of time, weights, quantities of liquid. Discusses what would happen if . . .	Anticipates meaning by predicting what will happen next in a story. Offers reasonable ending to a story. Answers questions: *What would happen if . . . ? Why should we . . . ? What could you do with . . . ?*	Demonstrates knowledge of basic processes by predicting what will happen if . . . (*. . . if we don't water the plant? . . . if it gets really cold tomorrow?* etc.)
Problem Solves: Applies basic skills and information to meet the needs of unique new situations.	Identifies "action" word in story problems. Selects correct measurement method (ruler, calendar, scale, thermometer, clock) for situation. Manipulates basic monetary units. Uses a simple graphing procedure to answer questions: *Who is the tallest in the room?*	Identifies main idea of story and makes simple inferences: *What do you know about Jack? What could Jack do?*	Uses available information to form a conclusion; identifies the information used: *Is it day or night? How do you know?*
Explains: Gives reasons for actions or decisions. Answers *Why* questions.	Tells how graphs are useful. Tells why $5.00 would not be enough for groceries.	Discusses motivation in stories. Tells why a picture or sentence is "funny."	Answers *Why* questions: *Why does an aquarium need plants?*

From: Weiner, C., Creighton, J. & Lyons, T. (1987). ***Kindergarten-teacher administered language kit (K-TALK).*** Tucson, AZ: Communication Skill Builders. Adapted with permission of the author.

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Remember basking in the warm glow of a lesson that really "clicked" with your students? Remember the frustration of presenting a lesson that had them all bouncing around like a bunch of ball bearings in search of a gear? When the lesson works, when you get that feeling of being right on, most likely the LIL and LIS are equal.

The difference between LSES children and MSES children is the frequency of the match between the classroom LIL and the student LIS

For MSES children at a Level 4 LIS, the classroom activities with a Level 4 LIL work quite well. *Most commercially available kindergarten curricula begin at an LIL of Level 4.* Most kindergarten goals and objectives reflect an LIL of Level 4 to Level 5. LSES children coming into a classroom with a Level 4 LIL start out behind and never catch up. The continued mismatch between the child LIS and the classroom LIL keeps learning rates and reading scores of children from poverty homes consistently below those of children from MSES homes.

Here's an example of the impact of mismatch: a group of kindergarten children at primarily a Level 2 LIS sat around their teacher who was demonstrating a district-required oral language lesson for the visiting educational consultant. The teacher showed a large picture which was accompanied by prepared "thought questions." The picture showed two adjacent abstract color line drawings of a family having a picnic. For the picture on the left, the tree beside the table was green. The picture on the right had a tree with orange, yellow, and red leaves. The prepared question for the teacher to ask was: *How do we know it's autumn in this* (the right side) *picture?* Because this question has an LIL of Level 4, the only answer from the children was silence. The teacher began ad libbing: *What happens in the fall?* (silence) *What do trees do in the fall?* (silence) Finally, she said, *It's fall right now. Think about what is happening right now.* After a long silence, one boy finally blurted out, *Halloween?*

The teacher was embarrassed to have the lesson crash and burn in front of the consultant, but the consultant pointed out that:

- Level 4 questions might be more appropriate for the end of the year.
- Her students would currently enjoy naming all the things they saw in the picture.

When the teacher changed the request to, *Let's see how many things in this picture we can name,* the students responded enthusiastically.

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What is needed to compensate for this difference so that LSES children can perform as well as MSES children?

Children from poverty homes who come to school with LISs at Level 1 to Level 3 require that the classroom LIL also be at Level 1 to Level 3. This calls for increased context in the school experiences provided. LSES children need more hands-on, direct experiences with objects; frequent opportunities to interact in pairs during cooperative learning activities; invitations to

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individual exploration; and enhanced one-to-one conversational opportunities.

These kinds of contextualized classroom learning opportunities accomplish two goals:

- They allow LSES children to learn the curricular content required.
- They compensate for the quality home language-building experiences that MSES had, but that LSES children did not have. As a result, LSES children are able to increase their own LIS and to handle increasingly demanding levels of classroom LIL.

Young children (grades Pre-K–2) receiving appropriate-level instruction learn content *and* develop essential classroom language skills. The gap between privileged and poverty children can be significantly reduced after just one year in a quality educational setting.

Within one year, children beginning kindergarten with a Level 1 LIS—far below the traditional classroom Level 4 LIL—can attain Level 3 or 4 LIS. They can do this while learning needed curricular content as long as there is a match between LIS and LIL. Interestingly, providing the match between LIS and LIL by increasing context does not slow the learning rate of more capable children. In fact, it makes the classroom a more interesting and dynamic environment for all students.

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How can schools provide what is needed?

Governing boards, administrators and teachers have a dual role in providing LSES children with the required early childhood education experiences, defining what is needed, then helping teachers to obtain it.

- The first step is for district personnel to seriously investigate the match between the child LIS and the classroom LIL in their own early childhood classrooms (grades Pre-K–2).
- The second step is to provide the Pre-K–2 teachers with the information, resources, materials and support required to match the classroom LIL with the student LIS.

The current status is frequently a high level of mismatch between the student LIS and the classroom LIL for young children from poverty homes

Several factors contribute to this mismatch. The first of these is the disappearing autonomy of the early childhood teacher (Pre-K–2) coupled with an incomplete educational feedback system. The second factor is the emphasis on high standards and a resistance to "watering down" the curriculum for "slow learners." The last factor is the variability of SES across district schools paired with the need for a single set of curricular goals, activities and materials.

Removing teacher input from the early childhood education process can result in "The Emperor's New Curriculum." Within the educational system, the administrator expecting an early childhood teacher to use his or her best judgment in meeting the educational needs of the class is becoming extinct. Top-down pressure to set and meet increasingly high educational standards at increasingly younger ages is turning early childhood teachers into cookie cutter deliverers of a prewritten set of educational procedures. When there is limited feedback to the

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district decision-makers concerning the suitability of the curriculum, there is no control over any mismatch between the classroom LIL and the child LIS. Although the teachers and students involved are aware of the struggle, administrators may not be open to this information and may prefer to presume the early childhood curriculum is meeting student needs. One feedback option open to teachers is to leave; the only option for students is to fail to learn the material.

Early childhood curricular decisions may be made by individuals with expertise in higher elementary grades or in secondary education. Freed from the weighty anchor of reality, individuals may fantasize freely about what young children could learn or what they should learn. Disregarding Lillian Katz's admonition not to confuse "academic" with "intellectual" goals (Katz, Rath & Torres, 1985, p. 28), well-meaning individuals write objectives not directly attainable by a kindergarten child from a poverty home. Examples are requirements to read and solve story problems, to make and use graphs, and to discuss mathematical set theory. These are appropriate when children reach an LIS of Level 4 or Level 5. For children with an LIS of Level 1 or Level 2, a more appropriate objective is to notice and comment on the differences among a circle, square, triangle and rectangle. These initially obtainable objectives, important to the learning process, are set aside and replaced if the decision makers feel they are too simple. In the minds of these uninformed decision-makers, "abstract" equates with "high standards," and "concrete" activities are too "watered-down." In actuality, "abstract" equates with "unattainable," and "concrete" is the first step in later achieving skills with abstractions.

Similarly, suggested activities may be written at an LIL of Level 4 or 5. For example, a State Department of Education suggested a kindergarten math activity that involves reading the class a story about shapes, then asking the children to identify the shapes. This activity carries a Level 4 classroom LIL. It will be mostly ineffective with a child with a Level 2 LIS. A better activity at this LIS would be to ask one pair of students to arrange a specific number, shape or color of parquetry pieces on a paper plate, then give the pattern to another pair of students to duplicate.

In a district with schools ranging from high SES to low SES, the LIL of the district-wide curriculum, activities and materials most closely matches the LIS of the high SES students. What frequently happens is that the curriculum works for the HSES children, but leaves the LSES children confused. For example, a popular kindergarten commercial reading material has children construct paper models of objects starting with the letter being studied that week. For the letter *w,* the object is a wagon that holds watermelons. The activity is to construct the wagon, then cut out the watermelons and put them in the wagon. This activity, because of the sequence of instructions, carries a Level 3 classroom LIL. The ability to benefit from the activity by making the connections between the words is at a Level 4 LIL.

The day the consultant observed, students at a Level 1 LIS were attempting to carry out this activity. The teacher knew that group instruction would be ineffective and that each child would need to be coached through this activity individually. She organized the children into working pairs. Each pair waited for the teacher to start them off by pointing to the wagon and saying, *Cut this out.* They did so, then stopped until the teacher came back to them and said, *Paste these sides together.* They did so, then stopped. Students spent most of the reading instruction time waiting to be told what to do next. Some waited quietly and some waited by engaging in behaviors that

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required the teacher to cease instruction and to urge the students back into quiet inactivity. Everyone was frazzled by the end of this activity. The children were uncertain and bored and the teacher was exhausted.

A better use of time for these children would have been to give each pair some newspapers and old magazines and to ask them to find and highlight as many *w*'s as possible. The teacher could then have helped each pair to select one or two marked words to share, shown them how to copy them on an index card, and invited them to show the words they had found in a later small group interaction. Because it requires direct discovery, this reading activity has a Level 1 LIL and is readily completed by children with a Level 1 LIS. Children can learn about the chosen letter more efficiently when the LIL and LIS match.

In order to identify a mismatch between the classroom LIL and the student LIS, it is necessary to acknowledge that it may exist. If the conditions discussed above are present in your district, the possibility of mismatch between classroom LIL and student LIS in Pre-K through Grade 2 is high. This mismatch impedes content learning and prevents additional development of the student's LIS.

A mismatch between classroom LIL and student LIS can be documented in a variety of ways

Specific details and suggestions for documenting a child's LIS are in Chapter 4. Observation, use of checklists, or direct testing all provide an indication of a child's level of LIS and the range of student LISs present in the overall classroom. Although the specific classroom LIL of an activity may vary depending on how a teacher presents it, a general idea is available from reading activity descriptions. The following chart offers an overview of the levels.

Matched Levels of LIL and LIS

Level	Indicators of Classroom LIL	Indicators of Child's LIS
1	Exploration of "real world" materials in response to general instructions such as, *See what you can discover* or *Find something that looks like this.*	Prefers silence, seems "lost" or inattentive in large group. Can follow instructions when given one-to-one and shown what to do.
2	Classification, sorting, grouping and matching.	Needs one-to-one instruction, group comments are off-topic, doesn't follow rules for raising hand.
3	Sequencing objects or activities.	Can discuss own sequences of activities, follow sequenced instructions, and respond with three verbs to a request such as, *Tell me how you make a valentine.*
4	Using language to learn about new things.	Can answer questions about a story.
5	Using language to express, clarify and justify thoughts and ideas.	Can answer "thought" questions.

After the mismatch is identified, schools need to provide Pre-K – 2 teachers with the information, resources, materials and support required in order to match the classroom LIL with the student LIS

Meeting the requirements is expensive. Objects cost more than pictures of objects, and the need for one-to-one interactions means more classroom assistants or other adults in the classroom. The advantage is that children provided with needed learning opportunities quickly develop to the point where they no longer require a learning environment richer than the one provided to their more privileged peers. The experiences provided at the lower LISs are similar to those that children from MSES homes received prior to coming to school. Since children from LSES homes did not receive these experiences before school, they need them during school.

In response to appropriate LIL instruction, children will continue to develop their LIS. Students at Level 1 LIS require the most help. They need one-to-one conversations about real-world objects; opportunity to explore objects and make independent discoveries; one-to-one instruction; and hands-on manipulation of objects. This is expensive. Luckily, students receiving instruction at a classroom Level 1 LIL rarely stay at Level 1 LIS longer than 4 to 8 weeks. In response to the quality language learning environment provided by the Level 1 LIL activities, children develop Level 2 student LISs.

At Level 2 LIS, children need opportunities and encouragement to talk to each other; direct manipulation of materials; and activities requiring matching, sorting and classifying. They need to be able to see and touch the things they are learning about, and they need frequent access to an adult "conversational partner." Given that these learning needs are met, some Level 2 LIS children can be at Level 3 LIS by winter break; others can attain Level 3 LIS by spring break.

Level 3 LIS children can talk about sequences of activities they have directly experienced. They can work in small groups of up to five children and can participate in small group discussion. They benefit from flannelboards, overhead projectors and other visual aids to instructions. With their learning needs met, some Level 3 LIS children can begin demonstrating Level 4 LIS behaviors by the end of their first year of school (either Pre-K or kindergarten).

The gains that young children make in developing their LIS become part of their permanent educational legacy. Many LSES children have no opportunity outside the classroom to continue developing their LIS. They do not have the materials, they do not have the experiences, and they may not have adults at home whose own LIS is higher than Level 3. Schools that provide the LIS development opportunities help to ensure educational success to young children from poverty homes.

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CHAPTER 2

If it's so important, why didn't I know about it before this?

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The Politics of Information

Many teachers of young children from poverty homes know about the importance of language

The speech-language pathologists (SLPs) are most likely to know about the importance of language

The children, of course, know

The people who may know the least about the learning needs of young children from poverty homes may be the people making the most decisions about how to teach them

The Timing of Information

Equality of Educational Opportunity identified the impact of SES on school success in 1966

Chomsky's view of a syntax-based language offered little for schools to use

The Development of Language Information

Language acquisition is more than syntax acquisition

The child and the adult both have active roles as language learners/teachers

Adults "scaffold" the communication process

Children control the topics of the conversations

The Essence of Language Development

- **In learning language, the child grows from dependence on contextualized communication situations to the ability to function in decontextualized environments**
- **Language skills fall into two categories: language that is adequate to support classroom learning and language that is not adequate to support classroom learning**
  - Restricted versus elaborated code
  - Casual versus formal register
  - BICS versus CALP
  - Learning to talk versus talking to learn
  - Perceptual-verbal talk versus verbal-verbal talk
  - Narrative skills versus dialogue skills

The Stages of Language Development

- **Lahey's Phases**
- **Blank, Rose and Berlin's Four Levels**
- **Weiner and Creighton's School Readiness Language**

The Language of the LSES Child

Diversion of Language Information

The Politics of Information

In essence, MSES children develop important language skills at a faster rate than LSES children. Considering what is known about the differences in home environments, this is not surprising. By the time most MSES children show up at kindergarten, they are able to use language to talk about things that are not physically present in the classroom. Normal classroom interactions depend heavily on this skill. In addition, MSES children continue learning language when they go home at night. A pleasant process develops: learn the language at home that you need in order to succeed at school, go to school and use the language you've learned at home, go home to learn more language. To make this process even more wonderful, the language skills that the MSES children have are exactly the ones that schools expect. The children learn language at home and the schools use this language ability to teach content.

In contrast, LSES kindergarten and first grade children are frequently at a slightly lower stage of language development—one more closely associated with MSES toddlers and preschoolers. The LSES children can talk about objects and actions physically present in their environment, but they cannot yet use language to talk about ideas and objects not physically present in the classroom. This is a problem. The LSES children do not have the language skills to meet the demands of their classrooms; when they go home, they may not learn any more language skills. An unpleasant process develops in which children are consistently asked to do things they cannot do and do not understand. To make this process even more damaging, the gap between the LSES children and the MSES children widens with each subsequent year.

Key individuals have long been aware of the connection between language and learning (Blank, 1982; Britton, 1993; Cazden, 1988; Luria, 1982; Snow, 1983; Tough, 1979; Vygotsky, 1962; Wells, 1986; Westby, 1985). A survey of 7,000 kindergarten teachers found that lack of language richness was the number one reason for students entering school not ready to learn (Boyer, 1991). For some reason, however, this quality body of information was not utilized in the development of commercially available curricula.

Although some programs are currently meeting language learning needs of young LSES children, the decision-makers for many more districts and states are still not aware of the importance of doing so. In an interesting paradox, the people who have the power to decide what will happen in the classrooms are not the people who necessarily have the information about what is needed.

Many teachers of young children from poverty homes know about the importance of language

Veterans of LSES early childhood classrooms have experienced the consequences of mismatch between the Language Information Load (LIL) of an activity and the Language

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Information Structure (LIS) of the children in the classroom: instead of participating in active, lively discussion, some children are silent. Getting a response is like "pulling teeth." When children respond, the answers are single words or phrases and may not be answers to the question. These are mostly children at Level 1 LIS.

Other children seem to talk constantly, but not about the topic under discussion. They do not follow a sequence of directions and frequently ask what they are supposed to do. They don't seem to understand how a classroom works. They talk when they should listen, ask questions when they should be answering them. Their written work indicates they did not understand the instructions. These children frequently have a Level 2 LIS.

While noticing these behaviors, teachers may not have attributed them to the gap between the LIL demands of the lesson and the child's available LIS. Given sufficient autonomy, creative teachers work out individual ways to close the gap between LIL and LIS: they keep discussions focused on descriptions of objects and pictures in the classroom; they introduce blocks and other manipulables to use with math worksheets; they plan to work with children individually. Other teachers become frustrated and blame the child *(He just doesn't listen)* or the parents *(They just don't get them ready for school)*. The teacher responses frequently stay at the level of the classroom; their experiences are not shared with the district or state decision-makers.

The speech-language pathologists (SLPs) are most likely to know about the importance of language

The school SLP may know more about the role of language than anyone else in the building and have the least power to do anything about it. As part of his or her training, the SLP takes graduate coursework in language development which may include the impact of language skills on school success. To the SLP, the gap between child language skills and classroom language expectations may be apparent, but the SLP is not in a position to act on this information. Structured by a job description that dictates work with children qualifying for special education services, the school SLP rarely has time to share information with teachers and may not be viewed as a quality source of information about regular education. There are some exceptions to this observation—programs in which the SLP has taken a leading role in creating language-appropriate environments for LSES children.

The children, of course, know

When the LIL of the classroom exceeds a child's LIS, there are few ways available for young children to indicate that this is happening. They can "tune out," occupy themselves with nearby materials and/or other students, or wander. They can fail to follow instructions or make off-topic comments. They can fail to learn the material presented. What they cannot do is say, *Please make the activities and requests in this classroom more concrete so that I can know what is going on.*

The people who may know the least about the learning needs of young children from poverty homes may be the people making

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the most decisions about how to teach them

The people responsible for writing commercial curriculum materials, writing state standards for content areas, and developing educational assessments have a powerful impact on what goes on in the classroom. They may be primarily skilled and qualified in areas outside of teaching young children. Even if their expertise extends to early childhood education, the model they have for kindergarten may be their own children or children of friends. They may understand what their MSES children know and can do; they may not understand the needs of LSES children. Because they are distant from the classroom, they lack the opportunity to see what happens.

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The Timing of Information

Little information on the connection between language and learning has made its way into classroom practice. This is probably because this information was available at the wrong time. The outcomes of education research can shape classroom practice. Before a "solution" can be suggested by research, however, schools need to be interested in the "problem." Much of the relevant research on language and learning took place in the 1980s—after the peak of interest in the educational role of language development.

Equality of Educational Opportunity identified the impact of SES on school success in 1966

A comprehensive study by Coleman, et al. (1966) gathered information about students from a variety of home environments. Student performance at six grade levels was compared with teacher, principal and family characteristics. One of the major outcomes of this national project was the documentation that poor kids simply do not do as well in school as middle class kids. A student's home environment predicted more about school performance than anything the school could do. Although this perception led some educators to give up on poor children *(What can we do? It's the home)*, others looked for key differences between the LSES and MSES students that could be addressed in the school curriculum. Language quickly took center stage as an important predictor of school success.

Vocabulary of LSES and MSES children was compared, and it was found that LSES children had poorer vocabulary and children with poorer vocabulary did less well in school (Hart & Risley, 1995; Oxman & Justman, 1971). Sentence structures were also compared. LSES children had shorter sentences and simpler structures and did less well in school (Loban, 1976). Attempts were made to respond to this information by adding oral language lessons to the curriculum. After extensive research, for example, the *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test* and accompanying *Peabody Language Kit* (Dunn, 1981) were published. The plan was to identify deficits and build the vocabulary of young LSES children. Much of the lesson was based on group description of pictures. Similarly, Englemann (1980) developed a series of scripted materials, known as DISTAR, for improving the sentence structure of LSES children. To use the materials, one teacher and one child viewed the pictures together while the teacher read the script and the child

imitated it. Although supported by research showing gains from use of these materials, the approaches were not widely adopted by the mainstream educational community.

Chomsky's view of a syntax-based language offered little for schools to use

Vocabulary and sentence structure had been part of language study since the 1940s. The more recent linguistic contribution, however, had little to offer to schools. In a book published in 1965, Noam Chomsky, the newest star of linguistic theory, promoted a breakthrough perception of language. In simplest terms, he said that language was composed of sentences which were *generated* by a small set of rules. In the same way that one formula in algebra can generate many answers, a formula for putting together words could generate an infinite number of sentences. It was this generative sentence building process and the related processes for transforming sentences (from statements to questions, for example) that composed the essential part of language (Chomsky, 1965).

Using his new theoretical framework, Chomksy and others (Berko-Gleason, 1985; Bloom, 1970; Brown & Bellugi, 1964; Cazden, 1968; Clark, 1972; Slobin, 1985) looked at child language acquisition. Children also, they concluded, showed evidence of generative grammar. As their sentences grew from two to five words, they showed regularities in sentence construction that could be explained with generative grammar. Language acquisition was seen as primarily syntactic acquisition, learning the rules for generating sentences. Chomsky explained that children acquire language though use of an undefined system called a Language Acquisition Device which "discovers" the underlying regularities (syntactic structure) of adult speech. Moreover:

- This language acquisition is largely passive. It just "happens" as the child is exposed to adult speech.
- The focus of learning is the child's innate independent language-learning system which functions independently from environmental variables.
- The important learning is largely completed by age three.

These perceptions effectively removed schools from interest in the language acquisition process. First of all, if it "just happens," it does not fit in with what goes on in schools. Second, if it's innate and independent from the environment, it cannot be affected by what happens in the classroom and, most important, it's all over before children ever show up for kindergarten. At that point, education turned away from investigation of language as a key factor in the learning problems of LSES children. With a sense of "been there, done that and it didn't work," educational researchers began investigating other avenues, quietly closing the door on the role of language acquisition in mainstream education.

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The Development of Language Information

An alternative view of child language started to gain ground in the early 1970s and became the prevailing view in the 1980s. There was, it turns out, more to language acquisition than syntax. A child's intended use of language and perception of the communicative context affected

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acquisition (Bates, 1979). Secondly, children did not acquire language passively. Instead, they actively structured adults to provide language input at the level needed. Last, language acquisition was far from over by the age of three. It continued through age seven and possibly to age 12.

Language acquisition is more than syntax acquisition

Language acquisition is motivated by pragmatics and is cognitively structured. A key component of child language acquisition is the child's communicative intent—what the child is attempting to accomplish within a specific setting. Children learn language by actively—and successfully—using language. For young children, successful use of language depends on the situation in which the language occurs. Children develop language because they want to do things with it: order people around, share an observation, express an opinion, ask for information and/or share information. These uses of language, called pragmatic functions, are already within the abilities of a child at the one-word level—so long as the observing adult can correctly interpret the combination of verbal, vocal, physical and facial expressions; find a connection between the child's communication attempt and the environment in which it occurs; and feel certain that the message understood was the one the child intended. This process of guessing at a child's meaning (Lloyd & Beveridge, 1981) is familiar to the parent of a young child, for whom the dialogues like the one below occur frequently:

Child: *Da* (pointing in the air).
Adult: (guessing) *Yes, that's up.*
Child: *Da!!*
Adult: *That's not up? What do you see?*
Child: *Da* (pointing at adult).
Adult: *Me? Mommy?*
Child: *Da* (waving finger).
Adult: *Oh* (noticing), *your finger's dirty.*
Child: *Da* (nodding). *Da–dee.*

Dialogues become easier for the adult to follow as the child is able to add more information to the communication. A child's language expands as the child's view of the world expands. Both vocabulary and sentence length grow with increasing awareness of how the world works. As the child sees and understands something, the child wants to talk about it. The adult in the environment of the language-learning child has a dual role: to attempt to figure out what the child is trying to say and to model the best way to say it. This process is so automatic that most adults are unaware of their active role in teaching language.

The child and the adult both have active roles as language learners/teachers

Once having figured out what a child is trying to say, most adults respond with a more complete version of the child's attempt. This confirms that they understood the child's attempt. It also creates a powerful learning cycle:

- The child has something to say but doesn't know how to say it.
- The child makes some general attempts to communicate.

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- The adult looks around and figures out what the child is trying to say.
- The adult says it back to the child for confirmation.
- As a result, the child gets to hear what he or she was trying to say in a more advanced form.

And that's not all that adults do to help their children learn language (Snow & Ferguson, 1977). They also:

- Slow their rate of speech.
- Match sentence length to the child's level.
- Simplify sentences.
- Repeat often.

Children cue parents by either understanding or not understanding what is said to them (Cross, 1977). This keeps the level of language right where the child needs it.

Adults "scaffold" the communication process

If young children learn language by talking with adults, how are children able to use their own meager language skills to hold up their end of the conversation? It turns out that adults and other more advanced language users (such as older children) have one more strategy available, called "scaffolding." In construction, scaffolding is erected to allow the business of building to continue without placing undue strain on walls not ready to bear the weight of workers. In a similar manner, adult conversation partners scaffold the child's communication attempts so that the child can participate as an equal—understanding and sharing information. In much the same way as an advanced tennis player might lob the ball directly in front of a beginner, the advanced communicator simplifies the process of communicating for the child and actually "holds up" the child's end by talking for the child, directing the child's attention and maintaining the subject of conversation. This adult role has several positive outcomes:

- The child can begin "playing" the conversation game almost immediately.
- The child learns the "rules" for conversations—one person talks at a time (turn-taking), the listening person shows an active interest in the talking person, the talking person tries to make the listener understand the message, etc.
- The child succeeds as a communicator and, as a result, chooses to continue the conversations.
- As mentioned before, these conversations are the stuff from which language skills continue to emerge. As children continue to converse with more advanced language users, their skills continue to develop.

Children control the topics of the conversations

A child's interest in a topic of conversation maintains it. If a topic is not of interest, the child will tune out, leave or switch topics. When the child chooses to introduce a new topic, the adult smoothly switches to the child's new interest. So the child provides the ideas or thoughts, and the adult helps the child to shape them into clear communication procedures. This ability to get a personal agenda handled through language keeps the acquisition process clipping along at a rapid rate.

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Language skills continue developing from age 3 through ages 7 to 12

In contrast to Noam Chomsky's earlier assertion that language development was pretty much over by age three, the interesting "school readiness" language skills only begin developing around then. From ages 3 to 5, children continue to increase sentence length and complexity. Between the ages of 3 to 7, children refine their comprehension abilities so that they can:

- Differentiate between *Ask* and *Tell* in requests like, *Ask me what my name is* (C. Chomsky, 1969). Most children younger than age five will respond by *telling* you what your name is. Try it.
- Correctly process more complex sentences. For example, understand that the dog was the runner in the sentence, *The dog that bit the cat ran* (Tyack & Gottsleben, 1986). If you say, *The dog that bit the cat ran. What ran?* many children under five will say, *The cat.*
- Relate meaning across two or more sentences. When they hear, *Fido was a dog. He flew through the air,* older children can respond, *Dogs don't fly* (Sulzby, 1986).
- Understand when a speaker has provided incomplete information (Gallagher, 1975). If you say, *I'm going to tell you a number and I want you to write it down. OK. Write the number now,* older children will tell you that they need to know what number to write.
- Understand and use conversational rules that include staying on a (teacher's) introduced topic (Paul & Cohen, 1982).
- Use "story grammar" (Stein, 1979) to understand the sequence of events in a story read to them.
- Follow the events of a story read to them without looking at pictures (Weiner & Creighton, 1987).

Children also continue to develop their speaking abilities so that they can:

- Relate events about which the listener knows nothing in a way that allows the listener to understand what happens (Weiner & Creighton, 1987).
- Use longer and more complex sentences (Loban, 1976).
- Express doubt (Blank, 1983).
- Talk about what might happen under specific circumstances (Lahey, 1988).

There is far more to language acquisition than was originally thought. Even for MSES children, important development continues after the age for starting school. Young children attending school are still actively acquiring the language skills needed for later school success. These skills include use of more advanced sentence structure, language support for higher cognitive functions and increased comprehension abilities.

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The Essence of Language Development

As researchers in the 1980s continued to pursue questions related to language development, school-age language skills, and required language skills for school success, three themes began to emerge. The first of these was the recognition of "decontextualized" language skills and

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the prevalence in schools of "decontextualized" language (language about something that is not directly present). The second theme was the division of language development into two discrete categories of ability: one category indicating an ability to handle school language requests, and the second category indicating the inability to manage these language requests of the classroom. The third theme was the division of language development into contiguous stages that, although overlapping, had some clearly defined characteristics.

In learning language, the child grows from dependence on contextualized communication situations to the ability to function in decontextualized environments

"Context" refers to the amount of the language topic that is present in the environment. For example, a mother coos to a six-month-old, *Oh, what cute toes you have! Here's a toe* (touching), *here's a toe* (touching), *and here's another toe!* (touching). This language is highly contextualized. The child has the toes, probably sees the toes, feels the touch on the toes, perhaps tastes the toes, and hears the word *toes.* All of the content of the language message is also in the environment. The words are added to perceptions. For every word of language, there is an accompanying perception.

At the other end of the "contextualization continuum" is a kindergarten classroom where the teacher may say, *Today, we're talking about whales. Whales are the largest mammals on earth. They live in the ocean and migrate every year.* Little in that sentence is actually present in the classroom. No whales, oceans, migrations or years. This is decontextualized language, or language used in the absence of anything in the immediate environment. The maximally decontextualized language environment may be a page of written words (Blank, 1982). In addition to not having the actual objects and actions in the environment, the reader also does not have access to the writer in order to request clarification.

Adults having watched a child develop language will be familiar with the stages of increasing decontextualization described below by deVilliers & deVilliers (1979):

> In the earliest stages of development the child's speech is very much tied to the here-and-now. There is little or no reference to the past and none to the future, and no talk of hypothetical events, so there is little to indicate that the child can do without the support of the immediate context of his utterances. In a short while, however, the child begins to refer more frequently to things that are not physically present. At first he might only have produced the words more milk upon seeing the bottle, but later he will tug at the refrigerator door or ask for it while playing in the garden. The words have become detached from their original stimulus and the child can now request objects in their absence. Around the same time the child demonstrates that he remembers things that happened in the past, though at first only people who know him well will understand his oblique references to past events. A child with only single words may come to a flight of steps where he has fallen and say "boom," reliving a painful memory . . . .
>
> References to the future take a little longer to appear, and parents soon learn not to promise treats in the distant future, for a tiny child hears nothing but the mention of a treat and not the fact that it will take place "tomorrow" or "after we have supper." By the age of three, however, children are usually beginning to talk of future plans, although this future may be immediate, tied to what they are presently doing: "I'm gonna tie this here," "I'm gonna go ride my bike," and so forth . . . .

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> The child begins to speak bound by circumstances; he ends by using language to invent circumstances . . . . As the child's words and sentences become further and further separated from the situations they describe, it is as if the child now carries the context of language around with him. (pp. 84-87)

This developmental progression from completely contextualized communication of the very young child to the ability to send and receive decontextualized messages (Bloom & Lahey, 1978; deVilliers & deVilliers, 1979) is important because the majority of classroom activities rely on student skill with decontextualized language (Dyson & Genishi, 1983; Heath, 1983; Katz, Rath & Torres, 1985). Also called "disembedded" language (Blank, 1982; Donaldson, 1978; Wells, 1986), the ability to use language to discuss objects and actions not present in the communicator's environment may be the key distinction between young children who succeed in school and those who do not.

Language skills fall into two categories: language that is adequate to support classroom learning and language that is not adequate to support classroom learning

The ability of a young child to talk in complete sentences, to carry on a conversation with friends, and to provide short answers in the classroom setting may cause teachers to discount language as the cause of learning problems. Being able to talk, however, is not the same as being able to respond successfully to the language demands of the classroom. This distinction between having the required language and not having the required language has been described by various labels:

- Restricted versus elaborated code (Bernstein, 1964).
- Casual vs. formal register (Payne, 1998).
- BICS versus CALP (Cummins, 1979).
- Learning to talk versus talking to learn (Westby, 1985).
- Perceptual-verbal talk versus verbal-verbal talk (Blank, 1982).
- Dialogue skills versus narrative skills (Feagans, 1982).

Restricted versus elaborated code. After noticing that educational failure was closely related to income level, Bernstein (1964) developed a code theory to explain the differences in language between social classes. Children from lower income homes more frequently used a restricted code, which is a highly context-dependent use of language. In order to understand restricted code, listeners need a shared context or experience because the language does not provide all the necessary information. An elaborated code, in contrast, provides explicit context-independent information. Simon (1993) summarizes the differences between the codes in the table on page 24.

Casual versus formal register. Payne (1998) uses the concept of language registers (Joos, 1967) to distinguish between the language expectations of the classroom and language needed for meeting more relaxed social expectations. The language of the classroom is the formal register which is characterized by three elements: standard syntax and vocabulary, a direct discourse pattern in which the speaker moves quickly to the topic of discussion, and story structure which emphasizes plot and temporal sequencing. In contrast, the casual register, which is language between friends, has limited vocabulary and incomplete syntax, an indirect discourse pattern,

Differences Between Restricted and Elaborated Codes

Restricted	Elaborated
Implicit statement of fact and intent.	Explicit statement of fact and intent.
Less time taken to plan the sequence of statements and logical relationships to be communicated.	A coherence of expression suggests mental planning prior to statement.
Speech is fast and articulation frequently sloppy.	Articulation does not impede listener comprehension of individual words.
Involves a basic (low) level of syntactic and vocabulary selection.	Appropriate variety in vocabulary and syntax is present; the speaker's intentions are presented with precision and appropriate complexity to syntactically encode intertwining relationships.
Speaker assumes common experiences with the listener.	Speaker focuses on the experiences of others as different from his own.
Reliance upon the extra-verbal channels during message transmission.	Orientation toward the verbal channel.
Limited use of language to verbally explore possibilities or conceptual alternatives.	A range of possibilities is verbally explored within a complex conceptual hierarchy.

Simon, C. (1993). ***300+ developmental language strategies for clinic and classroom.*** Tempe, AZ: Communi-Cog Publications. Used with permission of author.

and a story structure told in vignettes that emphasizes traits of characters. Students need capabilities with the formal register in order to succeed in school. Students from poverty environments do not have access to the formal register at home and cannot meet the formal register expectations at school.

BICS versus CALP. Cummins (1979) suggested a distinction between basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) in order to highlight (and prevent) the practice of moving students from bilingual classes into English-only classes before their language skills were adequate for classroom learning. A child's competency with BICS, or social peer language, does not guarantee the presence of CALP, or the more demanding language of the educational environment.

Learning to talk versus talking to learn. Westby (1985) distinguished between the earlier process of acquiring necessary language (learning to talk) and control over the higher level language skills required for school success (talking to learn). Among indicators that a child is talking to learn are:

- Telling stories about a single topic.
- Specifying the relationship between people and events with subordinate conjunctions *(because, but, therefore* and *when)*.
- Use of relative pronouns *(who, which* and *that)*.

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Perceptual-verbal talk versus verbal-verbal talk. Blank (1982) suggests that the important connection between oral language skills (talking and listening) and written language skills (reading and writing) might be tied to a feature that distinguishes between contextualized (embedded) and decontextualized (disembedded) language. Embedded oral language is perceptual-verbal talk in which each utterance is clearly tied to sensory awareness of a physical context–something seen, heard, smelled, etc. An example of perceptual-verbal talk is conversation about a puzzle that a child and adult are working together. By contrast, verbal-verbal language is tied only to previous language. An example of verbal-verbal talk is a discussion about a story the teacher has just read. A child not yet ready for verbal-verbal interaction may respond with disinterest or discomfort when asked to engage in dialogue at this level. The same child may interact comfortably when the dialogue becomes perceptual-verbal. Blank (1982) shares a dialogue between a teacher and a six-year-old child who is still at the level of perceptual-verbal talk:

Adult: *You know, this is a special book. Look through the pages and tell me how it's different from other books.*

Child: (rolls pen around in hands)

Adult: (takes pen from child) *Let me put this away. You can play with it later.* (p. 81)

At this verbal-verbal level, Blank notes, the child was, "disinterested, uncomfortable and taciturn" (1982, p. 81). When the teacher switched to a perceptual-verbal interchange, in which the discussion was about immediate actions and objects, the child's behavior changed dramatically:

Adult: *Now I'd like you to pour some of that water in this tub.*

Child: *All of it?*

Adult: *That's a very good question. Let's see. How about putting it up to this line.*

Child: *All right. There's just a teeny bit in there.* (1982, p. 82)

Blank attributed the child's change to the shift in the teacher's level of language requirements:

> Specifically, I believe that verbal-verbal, disembedded exchanges are difficult for young children and continue to be difficult for the children with problems in the academic setting. They do not understand the organization and rules by which such exchanges are carried on, which causes them to feel confused and defensive. By contrast, the realm of perceptual-verbal, embedded exchanges is clear and more easily mastered. (1982, p. 83)

Narrative skills versus dialogue skills. Feagans (1982), noting that the language for learning is different from the language for living, suggested that the mismatch between an LSES student's community language and the school's language expectations may account for learning difficulties. In examining these differences, she suggested that dialogue skills, the back-and-forth exchange in conversation, are different from narrative skills required by schools. Narrative skills allow students to process the event-structured language of the classroom. They include the ability to form narratives (introduction, setting information, character descriptions, theme information, event sequences and conclusions) and to understand them. A subsequent newsletter article (Weiner, 1989) expanded the concept of dialogue versus narrative skills to include the oral language characteristics listed on page 26.

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Dialogue versus Narrative Skills

Dialogue	Narrative
An interaction taking place between two individuals in which the speaker/listener roles and topics frequently change.	An interaction taking place among one speaker and one or more listeners in which the topic is determined by the speaker and the speaker takes one long turn.
Talk occurs during a shared experience.	The speaker may be the only one with knowledge of the event being discussed. (W)
Talk is "here-and-now," about ongoing activity.	Talk is "there-and-then," produced after the experience. (W)
Much talk is perceptual-verbal; that is, a verbal response to the shared perception of an object or event.	In cases in which the listener is asked to respond to questions, the talk is "verbal-verbal"; that is, verbal response to verbal information.
The speaker and listener interact and shift roles.	The listener is expected to maintain a listening role as the speaker takes one long turn. (W)
New topics can be introduced.	Topic or theme is determined by the speaker and maintained throughout the narration. (W)
A listener's verbal or physical response indicates whether the speaker was understood.	A listener who does not comprehend is responsible for obtaining clarification. (W)
Meaning is carried by words, the physical environment, intonation and prosody.	Meaning is carried primarily by words. (W)
(W) indicates a characteristic also true of print material.	

Weiner, C. (1989, January). Narrative skills key to classroom success. *Syndactics Bulletin*. Phoenix, AZ: Syndactics.

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The Stages of Language Development

Language development stages are groups of language behaviors all connected to a single step on a language development continuum. Awareness of stages of language development can be extremely useful to the language observer because it helps to organize perceptions. Generally, one dimension of language is selected as the key determinant of the stages, then other behaviors are attached to the identified groupings. Stages also reflect the prevailing view of language acquisition. Lahey's (1988) comprehensive set of eight phases integrate language development in content, function and use. Of specific interest for school success are the groupings suggested by Blank, Rose and Berlin (1978a) and later expanded by Weiner and Creighton (1987).

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Lahey's Phases

An early example of developmental language stages was identified by Brown (1973), who suggested that the parts of speech that children use (nouns, verbs, etc.) can be predicted from the average length of their sentences. In a broader explanation of language development, Bloom and Lahey (1978) described interrelating stages of growth in content (vocabulary), form (syntax) and use (pragmatics), stating that, "The major achievement in language development is the ability to use a linguistic code independently of the situational context in which utterances occur" (p. 307). Lahey revised this earlier work into a strong statement of language development in which, "There are developmental aspects of learning to use messages that parallel the learning of content/form interactions" (1988, p. 191). She identified eight phases divided into three sections:

- **Section One** (Phases 1, 2 and 3) covers the earliest development, when the child communicates about events and objects that are present. At this point the child talks about what he or she is doing, is about to do or wants others to do. The child's talk is contextually related, meaning that both the child and listener focus on the same objects or events in the environment that are the topic of conversation.
- **Section Two** (Phases 4 and 5) covers the growth of sentence length and variety. Children begin using questions to obtain information, and increase talk about the immediate past and the immediate future.
- **Section Three** (Phases 6, 7 and 8) is the level of sophisticated language use. Children can talk about objects and events removed in time and space. They increase their use of language to inform or report. Talk becomes less contextually related and more linguistically related.

Blank, Rose and Berlin's Four Levels

Unlike Lahey's look at content, form and use, Blank, Rose and Berlin's model focused only on language use (1978a). The developers of the model directly addressed the issue of classroom functioning. Observation that different preschool children are able to respond at different levels of demands made by their teachers led to a model of increasingly abstract teacher requirements. Within their framework of pragmatic development, all language demands made of a child are seen as ordered along a continuum of "perceptual-language distance" divided into four levels:

- **Level I:** Matching perception. Children at this level can directly match their language to their perceptions. They can respond directly to questions and instructions that call for matching perceptions. Examples: *Find one like this. Show me what you heard. Show me what you touched. What did you hear? What did you touch? What is this? Say this . . .* (imitation of a simple sentence). *What did you see?*
- **Level II:** Selective analysis of perception. Children at this level can sort perceptions into basic categories and name the categories. They can respond to questions and instructions that call for categorization. Examples: *Find one that can ____. What things ____?*

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Tell me how we use this/what we do with this (for characteristics as well as functions). *Tell me its color/shape. Find something that is ____ and ____. How are these different? Name something that is a ____.*

- **Level III:** Reordering perception. Children at this level can use information in a different sequence or manner from the way it was originally perceived. They can respond to questions and instructions that call for manipulating perceptions. Examples: *What will happen next? What could he say? Tell me how to. . . . What happened to all of these?* (to elicit a generalization) *How are these the same? What else can ____? Find the things that are not ____. Name something that is not a ____. What is a ____?*
- **Level IV:** Reasoning about perception. Children at this level can freely manipulate symbols of language in response to "thought" questions. They can respond to questions and instructions that call for reflecting on their own previous experiences. Examples: *Where will ____? What could she do? What will happen if ____? What could we use? Why will ____? Why is ____ made of that? How can we tell ____? What made it happen? Why is this called ____? What could you do? Why can't we ____?*

Because of varying rates of development, young children at the same age might be at any of these four stages of development. Only the highest stage in this model could support the language interactions of a typical kindergarten.

Weiner and Creighton's School Readiness Language

Weiner and Creighton (1987) modified and expanded Blank, Rose and Berlin's (1978a) model to begin at the earliest level of language learning and to include specific classroom language behaviors. They suggested that:

- The Blank, Rose and Berlin (1978a) levels of pragmatic development could be associated with various content (vocabulary) and form (syntax) abilities as well.
- The levels identified extended beyond preschool and could provide important language readiness information to kindergarten teachers.
- Each level was characterized by specific learning requirements.
- Teachers identifying specific levels of language ability could modify classroom practices to meet the learning needs of children at these stages.

Stage I covers the period from birth to first words. During this time, children learn to become capable prelinguistic communicators. Through a combination of gesturing, vocalizing, and the help of an interested listener, infants convey basic information about basic needs, wants and interests.

Stage II (Blank, Rose and Berlin's Levels I and II) begins with the use of the first recognizable word and extends through the use of short sentences. Language behaviors characteristic of this Stage are:

- Vocabulary for body parts, colors, etc., is incomplete.
- Speaks in three- to four-word "sentences" lacking small function words.
- Describes pictures by naming objects in them.
- Fidgets and/or looks around during group activity time.

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- Responds to a request for a definition *(What's a horse?)* by shrugging or pointing to the picture or object.
- Scores on language tests at a 2½- to 3½-year level.

Stage III (Blank, Rose and Berlin's Level III) emerges as children begin to string sentences together to form coherent narratives. Language behaviors associated with this stage include:

- Uses *–s* for plurals, third-person singular and possession.
- Uses well-formed, complete simple sentences.
- Connects sentences with *and.*
- Tells stories with simple sentences connected by *and* or *and then.*
- Follows group instruction if visual cues are present.
- During group discussion, makes off-topic comments.
- Responds to definition request *(What is a horse?)* by giving perceptual and functional attributes organized through experience *(You ride it, or My brother has one).*
- Responds to requests for clarification by repeating the same utterance.
- Indicates the need for clarification by doing the wrong thing.
- Processes complex sentences as though they were simple sentences
- Scores on language tests at a 3½- to 4½-year level.

The arrival of Stage IV (Blank, Rose and Berlin's Level IV) skills is signaled by the child's ability to relate events about which the listener knows nothing, by providing sufficient detail and coherence so that the listener, without coaching, comprehends what the child is saying. This is the stage of literate or "school readiness" language behaviors. Language characteristics of this stage include:

- Connects information sequentially with words like *because, since, until* and *while.*
- Relates events about which the listener knows nothing in a way that allows the listener to understand what happened.
- Responds to other's verbalizations in a way that extends the speaker's meaning.
- Has conversations with other children about what happened or will happen.
- During group discussion, makes comments on topic.
- Responds to definition requests *(What's a horse?)* with concepts based on experience *(It's an animal that has four legs, a mane and a tail, and you ride it with a saddle).*
- Responds to requests for clarification by providing additional information.
- Requests clarification.
- Derives meaning from a string of sentences.
- Understands and answers questions about a story without looking at pictures.
- Scores on language tests at a 5- to 7-year level.

Organization of language development information into stages provides an entry point for interested educators. Instead of taking several measures of child language through use of individual language assessment instruments (not feasible in a classroom), teachers can match child observation to description of stages in order to better understand the language development and abilities of children as they function in the classroom.

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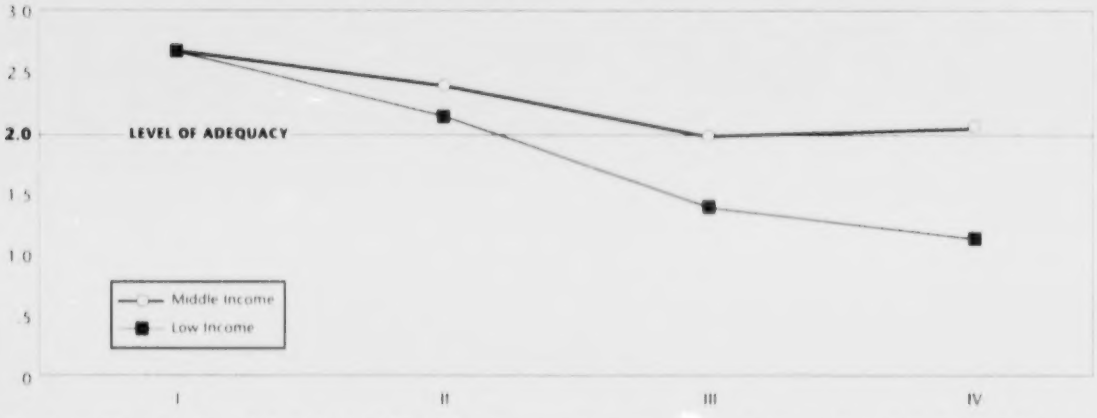
Average Language Scores of LSES and MSES Children



Data from: Blank, M., Rose, S. & Berlin, L. (1978a). *The language of learning: The preschool years*. New York: Grune & Stratton.

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The Language of the LSES Child

Organizing language into categories and/or stages allowed researchers to more closely examine the language skills of children from poverty homes. Based on their model of four stages, Blank, Rose and Berlin (1978b) developed a 60-item assessment of child skills at each of the four levels. For each item, a score of 2 or higher indicated adequate skill. To compare the performance of 20 LSES and 20 MSES five-year-old children, the average scores for both groups were computed at each of the four levels. As shown in the chart above, the average scores at Levels I and II were above the level of adequacy for both LSES and MSES children. By Level III, however, MSES children remained within the range of adequacy while LSES children's scores indicated inadequate skills. At Level IV, the divergence between the two groups had widened further. The implication of these results is that LSES children lack the more abstract Level III and Level IV language skills that MSES children demonstrate.

The Language of Children Reared in Poverty, a research compilation edited by Feagans and Farran (1982), provided the following information:

- Young children of educationally advantaged parents use language differently from children of manual laborers. The more privileged children more frequently used language to "analyze and reflect on present and past experiences, to reason and justify, to predict and consider alternative possibilities, to talk about events in the future, to project into the lives and feeling of others, and to build up scenes, events and stories in the imagination" (Tough, 1982, p. 6).
- Poor children are less skilled in "connected discourse"—language beyond the sentence level—than more privileged peers (Farran, 1982).
- Poor children are less able to retell a story than middle class children (Feagans, 1982).

A recent publication helps to explain why children from poverty homes come to school with these lower language abilities. In Hart and Risley's ***Meaningful Differences in the Everyday***

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Experience of Young American Children (1995) distinctions between preschool children in working class and professional families and those with parents on welfare were described. Key differences are listed in the chart below. Five categories of significant differences were identified:

- **Language diversity.** Higher-SES parents used more different words and different types of words.
- **Feedback tone.** More privileged parents were more encouraging and used fewer prohibitions.
- **Symbolic emphasis.** More educated parents described and explained more things.
- **Guidance style.** Professional class parents offered more choices.
- **Responsiveness.** Higher SES parents listened to their children more.

Differences Between Welfare, Working Class and Professional Class Preschoolers' Language Experiences

Class	Number of Words Heard per Hour	Estimated Number of Words Heard per Week	Encouragement vs. Discouragement per Week
Welfare Children	616	62,000	500 vs. 1,100
Working Class Children	1,251	125,000	1,200 vs. 700
Professional Class Children	2,153	215,000	3,200 vs. 500

Hart, B. & Risley, T. (1995). ***Meaningful differences in the everyday experiences of young American children.*** Baltimore: Paul Brookes.

These language interaction styles of three identified SES groups lead to the "intergenerational transmission of culture" in which poor children are exposed to language interactions that keep them at the lower end of language development.

In addition to documenting differences between the language acquisition rates of MSES and LSES children, researchers have been clear that this difference is attributable to economic necessities and cultural elections rather than parental dereliction. In the words of Snow, Dubber and Blauw (1983):

> There are many reasons to expect that social class would affect a parent's ability to provide a child with the linguistic environment optimal for supporting language acquisition. Social-class groups differ, for example, in their ideologies of childrearing—their notions about such things as what behavior traits are desirable in the child, how much effect that adult can have on the child's course of development and what teaching or training methods are effective. The social-class group that believes that certain kinds of verbal facility are highly desirable in children, and that verbal facility can be trained, is more likely to provide a linguistic environment that supports that kind of development than a group that values quiet and obedient children. The failure of the second group to provide an optimal language-teaching environment does not result from inability but from a positive choice to optimize other behavior traits; it cannot really be seen as a failure at all since the members of this group in fact succeed in achieving what they desire—children who do what they are told without protest. The failure, if any, occurs when the children

from this group are put in situations where they have to live up to expectations more appropriate to children from the other group. At school, for instance, their parents' norms for the ideal child are suddenly superseded by the teachers' norms, which may place higher value on verbal ability than on quiet obedience.

Another situation in which social class might affect the child's access to the optimal language-teaching environment involves no such social-class difference in parental goals. Two social-class groups that have identical notions about the importance of verbal training and verbal ability might nonetheless be differentially able to provide the language-teaching environment they both value. Teaching language and enhancing cognitive development must, in any family's list of priorities, come below ensuring basic survival for their children—providing food, preventing and treating illness, guarding against accidents, etc. The family that—whether because of poverty, chronic illness, large numbers of closely-spaced children, long working hours, poor housing conditions, or other factors—is devoting most of its resources to ensuring basic survival of the children can hardly pay much attention to their linguistic and cognitive development, though they might fully recognize the value of doing so. (pp. 53-54)

Children from poverty homes have early linguistic opportunities that are different from children growing up in middle class homes. Opportunities for rich verbal exchanges are more limited and parental goals and values may be more directed toward obedience than verbal skills. As a result, LSES children are at a clear disadvantage when attempting to meet educational goals based on the assumption of higher language skills.

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Diversion of Language Information

The potential utility of this important information about children from poverty homes and language development stages has yet to be realized in mainstream education. Although there was a wealth of practical language development information available by the close of the 1980s, this information was not routinely offered in primary teacher training programs. There may be many reasons for this, but the categorization of students by specific needs and the related requirements for teacher expertise probably played an important role in keeping language information out of the primary classrooms.

Passage, in the late 1970s, of the first law requiring widespread special education services led to an increase in learning disabled students and teachers for them. Since part of the legal definition of learning disabled involved a disruption of language processes, schools began perceiving language problems as problems in special education rather than regular education.

Similarly, as issues of bilingual education and attendant issues of language skills took center stage, students who spoke a language other than English were labeled Limited English Proficient (LEP), which effectively reduced further research concerning specific levels of language development these students had attained in their first language.

In this partitioning process, the questions of what young children from poverty homes might require may have become more an issue of what schools were prepared to provide. For whatever reason, accommodation to the children's current language levels accompanied by assistance with needed language development was not one of the options offered.

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CHAPTER 3

What can I do about this?

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Summing It Up

Key elements of the difference between LSES and MSES children

Meeting the language needs of LSES children

Preparing for Success

Increase teacher-child conversations

Look for chances to talk with children one-to-one

Create chances to talk with children one-to-one

View word games as special types of conversations

Have the "right kind" of conversations

Increase Child-Child Conversations

Look for chances to assign child-child interactions

Create chances for child-child interactions

Scaffold Comprehension

Comprehending and listening are not the same

Scaffold comprehension by offering auditory support

Scaffold comprehension by offering visual support

Scaffold comprehension with kinesthetic support

Scaffold Expression

Model how to talk through the answer to a question

Offer frequent group question "workouts" at comfortable levels of functioning

Stay with a "wrong" answer until it is a "right" answer

Welcome student ideas and other comments

Invite Child Initiative

Set aside some time each week for student suggestions

Model and encourage resource use

Summing It Up, Again

Summing It Up

The difference between the learning performances of middle socio-economic status (MSES) children and low socio-economic status (LSES) children is due to differences in their Language Information Structure (LIS) available for meeting the Language Information Load (LIL), or language requirements of the classroom. For MSES children, there is a good match between the child LIS and the classroom LIL; for LSES children, the classroom LIL is higher than the child LIS. While the LSES children are capable of learning, they are not capable of using language in the same way as MSES children. Curricular goals and activities written for MSES children have embedded, implicit language expectations that are too high for LSES children to meet.

Key elements of the difference between LSES and MSES children

While many language measures show LSES children with lower scores than MSES children, the key difference appears to be the MSES child's ability to use the decontextualized (verbal-verbal) language of the classroom. The ability to understand and respond to language removed from actual objects and actions is a major component of the MSES child's LIS. This skill with decontextualized language grows out of thousands of conversations in which the child leads and the adult scaffolds the communication. Poorer children receive fewer of these essential conversations at home. As a result, they arrive at school with a reduced LIS which cannot meet the LIL of the classroom.

From the first day of kindergarten on, much of the language children hear in the classroom is removed from the actual objects or actions discussed. Teachers teach by talking, then asking questions about what they said. They ask children to understand instructions, to follow the actions in stories and to share experiences with each other. The greatest decontextualized language demand is reading. In this case, the words are not only removed from the actions and objects; they are also removed from the "speaker" (writer), who cannot be asked for clarification.

Meeting the language needs of LSES children

The question of how to meet the language and learning needs of young children from poverty homes has a simple answer:

Have more language-building experiences in the classroom!

If you are a teacher, this may fill your heart with dread. You may groan at the thought of adding *one more thing* to an already overcrowded curriculum. You are used to thinking of blocks of time committed to specific goals: math time, reading time and so forth. You may feel that adding responsibility for language means adding another demand on precious time. But stop for just a minute and reflect:

- A child learns language by talking.
- You teach by talking to children.

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- Language is taught by talking *in particular ways.*

If you teach by talking *in particular ways*, you will help young children from poverty homes develop needed language skills. At the same time, you can accelerate their learning by matching the classroom LIL to student LISs.

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Preparing for Success

The suggestions offered in this chapter are for trying right away. (The following chapter describes a more comprehensive language-based approach to the entire curriculum.) These suggestions are based on a plan for getting more language-building opportunities into the classroom. They include using and creating opportunities for teacher-child and child-child conversations. For those times when actual conversations are not feasible, there are also ideas for making interactions more "conversation-like" by scaffolding comprehension and expression. Finally, there are suggestions for helping children to take the learning initiative. This increases their own involvement in the learning process and subsequent related language development.

Increasing classroom conversations and conversation-like experiences allows schools to continue the language development process by picking up where homes have left off. Conversations are dialogues rather than narratives. They take place between two people, either of whom can introduce new topics. The lower a child's language level, the more the child needs to control the topic of conversation.

Classroom conversations lack one essential ingredient present in home conversations of MSES children: the option for the child to take the lead. When the child leads conversations, the child selects the topic of conversation and sets the difficulty level. This keeps language input at exactly the level the child needs. Within the classroom, the teacher is expected to lead the conversations. This can be a problem, especially for children with low levels of LIS. Without the feedback provided by one-to-one conversation, it is difficult for teachers to know exactly where students are functioning.

Five ways suggested for offering conversations and conversation-like experiences are:

- Increase teacher-child conversations.
- Increase child-child conversations.
- Scaffold comprehension.
- Scaffold expression.
- Invite child initiative.

Sample actions and activities are described below.

Increase teacher-child conversations

Look for chances to talk with children one-to-one about what is going on in front of them and what they are doing. Plan brief but frequent one-to-one comments. Avoid questions. Talk with children individually even when they are in groups. After capitalizing on existing opportunities, extend the number of conversations by creating new opportunities.

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Look for chances to talk with children one-to-one. Use this time to state the obvious. It may not be obvious to the language-learning child. While the child may share your perception of the situation, he or she may lack the ability to fluently describe it. By hearing your words, children receive a powerful model of how language works and an invitation to extend the conversation if they wish to do so. Comment on positive actions that are specific to individual children by using vocabulary and concepts appropriate to the situation.

Talk to individual children during materials distribution. Say:

I'm putting this sheet in the center (on the edge) of your desk.
You're the third person in this row to get a sheet.
I'm putting this sheet down quickly (slowly, rapidly).
You have four different crayons. One is very short.
This is the second sheet I've given you today but the first one this afternoon.

Use transition times to comment on positive student action. Say:

You look like you are preparing to think about our next lesson.
You are standing between (Name) and (Name). We will go outside in a few minutes.
You have your books stacked neatly under your desk.

Talk to individual students as they complete their work. Say:

You finished the first two problems and are starting on the third one.
You found a word that starts with b. *Now you're looking for another one.*
You wrote answers for the first half of the questions.
You found three of the missing pictures already.

Talk through a lesson with a child instead of letting him or her silently work. A child who is being "talked through" a selected use of materials may learn more language and content than a child silently struggling to respond to instructions.

Here's an example:

> The educational consultant watched kindergarten children look through pictures they had cut from magazines. Their assignment was to locate pictures of things that start with *t*. After fifteen silent minutes, one child had located one picture. The consultant sat beside the child and began to describe the pictures: *This is a parking lot. Here are some cars and here is a big t-t-t-*. The student lighted up. *Truck! That's a* t-*word!* he realized. As the consultant continued to describe each picture, the child stopped her whenever he heard a word that started with *t*. After five minutes, the child had identified over ten pictures and had begun describing the pictures out loud, listening to the sounds in each word.

Use information talk instead of questions. Teachers are comfortable using "guiding questions" to help a child. For some children, however, repeated questions can result in increased anxiety and (often) silence or one-word responses. Instead of putting the child on the spot with questions, "pour words" onto the child's actions. This gives the child the opportunities to hear how language in a specific situation works.

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Here's an example:

The educational consultant watched a visiting third grader struggle to interact with a kindergarten child. While the kindergartner was working an alphabet puzzle, the third grader was asking about selected letters:

Third grader: *What letter is that?*

Kindergartner: Silence. Tries to place the *b* in the puzzle.

Third grader: *That's a* b. *What word starts with* b*?*

Kindergartner: Silence. Continues trying to place the letter.

After several attempts being met with silence, the third grader was beginning to turn red beneath his freckles. The consultant asked the child how everything was going, and the third grader said, *Not so hot.* When the consultant asked if she might try something, the ten-year-old agreed with considerable relief. *I'm not going to ask any questions,* said the consultant. *I'm going to watch and try to think of words that match what is going on.* She proceeded to demonstrate by saying to the kindergartner, *You have the letter* b *in your hand. You're looking for a place to put it. You are looking at the middle row* (indicating the middle row). The consultant stopped, silent, until the child moved the piece to the top row. *You didn't find a place to put the* b *on the middle row. You're looking at the top row now. You found the place to put the* b. *You found it on the top row.* After a moment of silence, the kindergartner looked at the consultant and said, *I put it here.* The third grader was thunderstruck. He turned to the consultant with a look of awe on his face. *She talked,* he gasped, *she actually talked!* The consultant moved on to talk to other children. When she returned, the third grader was expertly describing the kindergartner's actions and the kindergartner was occasionally commenting. *How's everything going?* asked the consultant. *Great, just great!* responded the now successful conversational partner.

Have conversation-like interactions with a group through observation of physical response. Ask children to raise their hands, stand up, clap their hands or make some other type of physical response to requests or information. Say:

If it's Tuesday (sunny, hot, morning, etc.), *stand up (clap your hands, raise your hand). Show me 2 plus 2 (2 plus 1, something fuzzy, something hot,* etc.). Students can use preprinted pictures or answers to hold up.

Is a dog an animal (a pear a fruit, a car a vehicle)? Students can have paper plates with Yes on one side and No on the other side that they show in response to questions. Use content information to create very short stories with accompanying questions:

Story: *A whale is an animal. It lives in the ocean.*

Questions: *Is a whale a vehicle? Is a whale a food? Is a whale an animal? Is a whale a plant? Does a whale live on a mountain? Does a whale live in the ocean? Does a whale live in a tree?*

Here's an example:

The educational consultant tried to quiet the rising internal anxiety. While the classroom teacher, principal and assistant sorted a stack of dropped papers into

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collated testing materials, twenty-three pairs of eyes watched for something to happen. The dreaded "non-planned space" had occurred, and this kindergarten class had a reputation for being especially unruly. Seeing the cans of crayons available to each child, she began, *Find a red crayon and hold it up.* As students began to hold their discoveries aloft, she quickly moved to each student, saying, *Yes, that's red, you found your red, you're holding red,* etc., and indicating that each child spoken with could lower the hand holding the crayon. After twenty-three brief conversations, she looked around. While the adults were continuing the paper shuffle in the rear of the room, twenty-three faces were watching her in rapt silence. *OK, find your green crayon and hold it up,* she continued. This time, she skipped two children and was quickly corrected by the class. *Oh,* she said to one child, *I missed seeing you because you were behind me.* To the other, she said, *I was going so fast, I skipped right over you.* Again the children sat quietly watching the consultant, waiting for the next instruction. *Find your orange crayon and hold it up,* she said. Through the background noise of jostled crayons came a single voice. *This is fun!* the student said.

Continue turning existing opportunities into conversational moments. At some point, children addressed individually in quick classroom conversations will want to begin responding. Expanding on their responses helps to build important discussion skills. Expansions continue the communication intent of the child:

Teacher: *You have a red crayon in your hand.*
Child: *I have two more reds in my box.*
Teacher: *And you picked the newest red to hold up.*

Create chances to talk with children one-to-one. Some activities lend themselves to conversations more readily than others. Generally, when children are individually engaged with materials over a period of time, this is a good time to have individual conversations. Art projects and materials-based assignments are good examples. In addition, the more adults (or older children) available, the more conversations can go on.

Add drawing assignments to existing lessons. At the end of a science, math or reading lesson, ask children to: *Draw what we just did,* or *Draw something that shows what we did in science (math, reading) class.* As children begin, use the engaged time to have conversations about what they are doing. Again, avoid using questions as much as possible. Instead, verbally encode the child's own actions. Children can also be asked to draw a picture in response to a word, a sentence or a paragraph. This offers conversation time as well as a good index of child comprehension level.

Offer manipulables for "discovery" assignments. If storage permits, keep a supply of "real world" manipulative materials that children can use to make their own discoveries about how things work, go together, etc. A sample list of appropriate math discovery materials is listed on page 40. Materials can be grouped to suggest activities, or children can select one or two sets for their own grouping and exploration.

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Keep instructions for use simple and open-ended. Samples are:

Put these in order (together) into sets.
Sort into two (three, four) stacks (piles).
Fit as many _____ as you can into the _____.
Find out what's in here.
Find something to do with these.

As children explore the discovery materials, use the time to have one-to-one conversations with them about what they are seeing and doing.

Math Discovery Materials

Empty spools	Straws (colored)	Popsicle sticks
Tooth picks (colored)	Blocks (various sizes)	Broom handles (18 inch)
Empty paper towel rolls	Balls (various sizes and colors)	Large wooden beads and yarn
Bottle caps	Plastic/paper cups	Washers
Nuts and bolts	Clothes pins	Nails
Empty cartons (quart, pint and half pint)	Measuring cups (thirds, fourths and halves)	Rulers (1 foot and 1 yard)
Toy money	Flannelboard figures	Geometric shapes
Press-on numbers	Egg cartons	Markers (varying widths)
Thermometer	Dials (TV, radio, bike speedometer, clock and combination lock)	Egg timers
Material scraps (various sizes, colors, patterns and textures)	Cake/muffin pans	Measuring spoons
Peg boards and pegs	Play cash register	Calendars (various types)
Large set dominoes	Stepping stones with numerals/dots	Number stencils
Empty berry boxes	Measuring spoons	Magnetic boards and objects
Rods for counting	Number puzzles	Number books

Bring in more "talkers." Since the ideal conversational group is a pair, more talkers mean children may have more conversations. Within the limits of school policy, volunteers or volunteer groups may be recruited, or older students may be invited to visit the classroom.

A brief training session and/or a set of written instructions can ensure that visiting talkers make quality conversational partners. A sample format for written instructions is on page 41. The most important role the conversational partners can play is to talk to the child about the child's ongoing interests. The least important role they can play is to lead the child into answering their questions or listening to talk about things that interest the talker.

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Sample Written Instructions for Visitors and Volunteers

Welcome to our pre-kindergarten class. Here are some suggestions for how to interact with children who are using the materials described below.

Materials

A supply of used and new paper.	Charts and graphs are interesting. Outdated calendar pages add a different challenge. Blank newsprint (8½" x 11") is good.
Pencils, crayons, marking pens	
A file folder with pockets containing empty envelopes.	These can be used for a child to take things home.

What you may see children doing

- Stirring the contents of a tub looking for a particular marking tool.
- Selecting a sheet of paper and beginning to draw.
- Coloring inside calendar "boxes" or graph squares, using a variety of colors.
- Sorting the marking tools by type, color or size.
- Making printing marks on paper.

The children know these rules

- This collection is to stay with the tub of materials
- One child uses the writing materials kit at a time. That child may choose to share with another child but has the option not to share.

Here are some things you could say that would help the children learn language

- Describe the child's activity:
  You are working with crayons.
- Describe what the child might be thinking:
  It looks like you might be figuring out what to draw in that space.
- Comment positively and often on socially helpful behavior:
  You put the marker back in the box before selecting another one.
- Try to extend the meaning of the child's conversation.
  Child: *I'm making a horse here.*
  Visitor: *I see your horse and I see its mane and tail.*
- If you wish to comment on the drawing but are not sure what it is, say:

  That looks like you are working hard to make _____ (describe what you think the child is doing).

  If the child nods yes, you might say: *I thought it was a* _____ *because....*

  If the child shakes no, say: *I guessed wrong.*
- Understand that silence is OK. You may watch the child in silence if you feel you have nothing to say.
- Please avoid questions. The children need to hear how you would use language to describe their interests. Giving them good examples of language will help them very much.

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One of the best talkers, if he or she is available, is your school's speech-language pathologist. This individual has a great deal of information and experience in the area of language development and could offer invaluable assistance and modeling. If possible, schedule some time for him or her to spend with you in the classroom talking with children.

View word games as special types of conversations. Word games have much in common with conversations: they require taking turns, the "conversational partner" can respond in some unique ways, and playing involves putting thoughts and words together. Selecting the same few games to play repeatedly gives students a chance to catch on and prepare for the next bout. Also, games introduced and played as a whole class can be played by smaller independent groups later. Whenever possible, share the "lead" with a student and make the class as self-sufficient as possible.

Out-the-door games are quick time fillers. Two to three minutes before lunch offers time for a few rounds of quick word games like the ones described below:

Word Hunt

The teacher writes a word on the board and announces, *I'm hunting for words to go with* ____. As children provide words, the teacher validates *any* suggestion. Here's an example:

Teacher: *I'm hunting for words to go with 'giraffe'* (writing word).
Child: *Jungle.*
Teacher: (writing word) *Giraffes live in the jungle.*
Child: *Bathtub.*
Teacher: (writing word) *Giraffes might drink water from a bathtub.*

Word Search

The teacher writes a word from a recent lesson on the board. Students are asked to provide a word somehow associated with the first word. The teacher writes the word suggested, explains the association, then asks for a word associated with the *new* word.

Word Collection

The teacher writes words suggested by the students. When a student volunteers a word, the teacher makes up a sentence for the word and writes the word on the board.

Remembering

The teacher asks students to say one thing they did in class that morning (afternoon) and writes the response on the board.

Categories

The teacher provides a short category description, and then children take turns suggesting a member of the category. Examples of category descriptions: It can eat hay. *It can fit into a shoebox. It flies. It is faster than a car. It's bigger than a playground.* As a variation, the teacher can provide two members of a category (such as *socks* and *pants*) and invite children to name other members of the category.

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Organized games. The materials used for these games can be varied to address science, math or reading concepts. Plan fifteen to twenty minutes for games like the ones described below:

Spotlight

In a darkened room, the teacher or a student uses a powerful flashlight to light up an object or picture in the room. Children take turns providing words that describe the spotlighted item (may also use an overhead projector and transparencies).

Word Filler

The teacher or a student reads a sentence from a lesson and says *Bing!* or uses a buzzer instead of one word. Students take turns providing possible words that would fit.

Description

Students each have a blank sheet of paper and some crayons. The teacher gives an instruction (*Draw a large circle,* for example), then several student take turns giving instructions. Children form into pairs to compare drawings.

Have the "right kind" of conversations. After a fifteen-year study of language skills and school achievement, Wells (1986) observed, "We found a clear relationship between the children's rate of progress in language learning and the amount of conversation they experienced . . . . What seems to be more important is that, to be most helpful, the child's experience of conversation should be in a one-to-one situation in which the adult is talking about matters that are of interest and concern to the child" (1986, p. 44).

Providing these conversations can be trickier than first thought. The teacher, as the more advanced communicator, has the power to pick the words to use. It takes skill and sensitivity to keep the words on the child's interests and not the teacher's idea of what the child *should* be interested in (Weiner, Creighton & Lyons, 1989). Consider the following conversation about a child's use of a set of seashells (1989, p. 19):

Child: (Picking up individual shells and looking at them.)

Teacher: *I see you have lots of different shells there. I see some big ones and some little ones.*

Child: (Picks up shell. Touches the smooth inside.)

Teacher: *The inside of the shell is very smooth. It probably feels a little cool when you touch it.*

Child: (Touches the outside of the same shell.)

Teacher: *The outside is rough. It feels prickly when you put your finger against it.*

This conversation offers child learning at maximum speed. Words like *different, big, inside, outside, smooth* and *prickly* are offered appropriately for the child to hear and store away. The same is true of sentence structures and uses of communication. In addition, this interaction builds child confidence and validates the child's own perceptions and actions.

Here is another conversation with the same set of materials, the same child, but a different teacher (1989, p. 19):

Child: (Continues exploring shells, now carefully touching the smooth inside of each shell.)

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Teacher: *Those are shells. They come from the ocean far away. Animals live in them. Do you remember what part of clothing is made from shells—or used to be?*

Child: (Shrugs shoulders, puts shells down, and looks at teacher.)

Teacher: *We can learn a lot about the animal who lived here by looking at the shell. What shape do you think this animal was—the one that lived here?*

Child: (Smiles at teacher and blinks.)

Teacher: *Well, do you think it was round or some kind of spiral?*

Child: *Uh . . . round?*

Teacher: *Yes, that's right. A round animal lived in this shell.*

Any reader who feels the second conversation example offers a superior learning opportunity to the child should read Chapter 2 again. While the teacher offers quality information and makes an interesting connection, it is *too much, too soon* for this child. This conversation reflected the teacher interest, not the child interest. Any reader who noticed that, in the second conversation, the teacher's words actually interrupted the child's unique thought processes gets special sensitivity points. After noticing, with the first teacher, that the inside and the outside of a specific shell felt different, this child was in the process of empirically generalizing that observation. It would have been perfect if the second teacher had noticed the child's actions and added a comment like, *You're discovering that all the seashells are smooth on the inside.*

Wells (1986, p. 88) offers an example of a similarly misdirected conversation:

Lee: (Showing his teacher a horse chestnut that he has found.) *I want to show you! Isn't it big?*

Teacher: *It is big, isn't it? What is it?*

Lee: *A conker* (a term for a horse chestnut).

Teacher: *Yes.*

Lee: *The . . . that'll need opening up.*

Teacher: *It needs opening up. What does it need opening up for?*

Lee: *'Cause the seed's inside.*

Teacher: *Yes, very good. What will the seed grow into?*

Lee: *A conker.*

Teacher: *No, it won't grow into a conker. It'll grow into a sort of tree, won't it? Can you remember the...*

Lee: *Horse chestnut.*

Teacher: *Horse chestnut—good. Put your conker on the nature table, then.*

Wells' comments on this interaction:

> In many ways, the teacher's intention here is praiseworthy–to help Lee extend his interest more reflexively, to make the connection between the conker and the tree that it came from and will grow into. But what a price had to be paid. Lee's topic is appropriated by the teacher as she imposes her perspective as the basis for her questions—questions to which she, of course, already knows the answers. Under the constraint that she thus imposes, Lee's utterances decrease in length and complexity; from offering information about what he is planning to do with the conker, he is reduced to providing a simple labeling response to a questions on a topic that he hadn't wanted to talk about at all. (p. 88)

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A more helpful response from this teacher would have been one that picked up on Lee's plan to open the conker. She could have responded, for example, *Yes, if you want to get to the seeds, you'll have to open the conker because the seeds are inside.* This type of comment could have led to a discussion of Lee's unfolding plan for opening the conker. The key to successful conversations is to focus on what the child is trying to do or say and to limit contributions to comments that further the child's own intentions. Conversations should, as much as possible, stay in the realm of the here-and-now; talk about what the child is seeing, doing or planning to do shortly.

Increase Child-Child Conversations

Another way to increase the number of talkers in the room is to plan for increased child-child conversations. Under the right circumstances, child-child conversations can speed both content and language learning along handily. Children talking to children need to be more advanced in their communication skills than children talking to adults; other children may lack the scaffolding skills of the adults, or simply be uninterested in helping the communicator. Children learning together can encourage and structure each other. Some teachers worry that setting up child-child conversations may be the quickest route to uncontrolled mayhem. A few precautions and preparatory steps can help to keep the pair conversation time productive and pleasant:

- **Start small.** Keep initial instructions very simple (*Look at these things together*). Keep initial interactions short. Allow no more than ten minutes. Plan to build on success with longer and more involved activities.
- **Post and review rules before each conversation time.** Sample rules are Talk Quietly, Treat Others with Respect, Handle Materials Carefully, and Stay on Task. Emphasize that rules are important to help everyone learn without disturbance.
- **Have a non-pair activity.** Set up two or more desks with a worksheet to which non-complying children can be quickly and quietly routed if needed.
- **Use a visual indicator that talking is OK.** A paper plate with the words "Talking Time" can be hung in the front of the room. (If talking is OK most of the time, use an indicator or a signal for those times when children need to do something silently.)
- **Have a wrap-up discussion.** Use this time to mention quality learning behaviors you observed and to let children share actions and discoveries.

Look for chances to assign child-child interactions. Many things children may be doing individually and silently can be considered as potential pair assignments. Dialogues can also be preludes to group discussion. Ask children to talk to a partner prior to group discussion. Examples of assignments could be:

Talk about what's happened in the story so far.
Talk about what we learned so far.
Tell your partner all the things you can think of that are made of plastic.

Have children complete worksheets in pairs. There are several variations on this theme. One is to pair children up and give each pair a simple, short worksheet to complete together. Another way is to select just one or two pairs to work together while the other children

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complete the work individually. Point out to the paired children that they must talk quietly enough to avoid disturbing the other children. Each day, add one or two pairs until all children are paired. A third way to pair children completing worksheets is to add objects or other manipulables so students can solve the problem with manipulables before writing the answer on the worksheet. This last approach will require some demonstration and explanation. See "Give instructions with a model" under "Scaffold Comprehension" on page 51.

Have children create puzzle problems in pairs for other pairs to solve. Review current assignments to see which could be modified for "pair puzzles." A rich language/learning activity is asking one pair of children to create a puzzle or problem that a second pair solves. Here are some examples:

- Using parquetry pieces, the first pair creates a design which the second pair copies.
- Using beads or blocks, the first pair creates a series which the second pair continues.
- The first pair writes a sentence which the second pair illustrates.
- The first pair writes a math problem which the second pair solves by counting objects before writing the solution.

Here's an example:

> The educational consultant reviewed the spelling tests with the second grade teacher. It was spring, the room was hot, and the spelling results were dismal. Each Monday, the students were given twenty words. They were given about fifteen minutes per day to study the words, then had a spelling test each Friday. The following Monday, the consultant brought in 12 cookie sheets and 36 magnetic alphabet sets. She formed the students into pairs, gave each pair the spelling list, a cookie sheet and 3 alphabet sets. The pairs were told to form as many of the spelling words as they could in the time permitted. At the end of the spelling period (about fifteen minutes), the consultant asked the students to move the cookie sheets to the counters where they would remain untouched. The second day, students added a few more words to their cookie sheet spelling list. The third day, the consultant told the children to remove one letter from each word on their cookie sheet list and to give the resulting "puzzle" to another team to solve—without looking at the spelling list. This step took longer than the assigned spelling time because pairs of students then wished to check their answers against the spelling list. The fourth day, individual students recreated the magnetic letter puzzle by writing spelling words in a list, leaving out two letters per word, and giving the list to a classmate to fill in the blanks. The fifth day, students created their own puzzles by leaving three letters out of each word (while looking at the spelling list), then filling the letters in without using the list. They then took the spelling test. Several things changed. First, the student culture of "hating spelling" was changed to an eager anticipation of spelling time. Second, as students talked through strategies, the teacher was able to point out the tricky parts of each word, to suggest good puzzles, and to help with solutions. Third, student opportunities for conversation provided much needed practice in negotiating meaning. Last, the spelling scores increased.

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Create chances for child-child interactions. Review current activities and instructional goals to locate opportunities to convert silent "seat work" into child-child interactions. Plan to have, as an eventual goal, one child-child interaction activity every day.

Convert worksheets into worktubs. Worktubs are dishwashing plastic tubs with sets of materials that invite a particular use. Some worksheets lend themselves to conversion to worktubs. Instead of connecting words to pictures, for example, children could sort through a tub containing objects, photos of objects, and words of objects. Sample ideas for creating and using worktubs are provided below.

Using Worktubs

Instructions: Prepare or organize the materials described and store in plastic dish tubs or plastic sweater storage units. To use, first help students pick a "learning partner." Then guide them in deciding (on their own) what to do with the materials, or provide very simple instructions for use. As students proceed, move to each pair, commenting positively on their findings and asking open-ended questions when appropriate.

Grade	Materials	Ideas for Use
Pre-K - K	Magnetic letters, cookie sheet, word and picture cards.	Students find words to copy using the magnetic letters.
Pre-K - K	Newsprint, letter cards and magic markers.	Students locate and highlight a selected letter in the newsprint.
K - 1	Tagboard of various lengths, word cards, markers, scissors, hole punch and loose-leaf rings.	Students pick favorite sight words, write on tagboard, cut to length and use loose-leaf ring to create a personal set.
K - 1	Magazines with pictures, scissors, glue and adding machine tape in rolls.	Students create and "read" their own object or story strips. **Skills:** sequencing, vocabulary and narration.
K - 2	Flannelboard figures and accompanying stories.	Students use the figures to retell the stories. **Skills:** narration and sequencing.
K - 2	Commercial worksheet pages (laminated) with erasable markers.	Students pick one and work together.
1 - 2	Ad inserts from Sunday newspapers and play money.	Students create shopping list with money available. **Skill:** math calculation.
1 - 2	Viewmaster with discs, paper and crayons.	Students work together to illustrate and tell the Viewmaster story. **Skills:** narration and writing.
1 - 2	Syllable cards (beginning letters on one index card, the rest of the word on another card) and Pictionary.	Students put cards together, then try to figure out if they've made a word. When there are questions, they check the Pictionary. **Skill:** putting letters together to form words.
2	Origami instructions and colorful paper squares for folding.	Students follow directions to make folded animals and other objects. **Skills:** sequencing and use of printed material for obtaining instructions.

Note: These are just a few ideas to get you started. Any interesting print or sequenced material that facilitates independent exploration and problem solving can be adapted to worktub use.

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Introduce key words, sentences and paragraphs. Provide tagboard strips and sheets, markers, hole punches and loose-leaf rings for students to use alone and in pairs. Students begin by selecting personal sight words. A volunteer writes the word on a strip of tagboard, then cuts the strip to the length of the word and punches a hole to the left of the word. Students put the word on a ring to start a personal key word ring. Students may prefer to write their own words or to copy the penciled letters of the volunteer. At times during the day, the teacher instructs, *Find a partner and read your key words to each other.* Students wishing to do so may advance to key sentences that work the same way. To create key paragraphs, students select a calendar or magazine picture and dictate a description to a volunteer, who prints the child's description on a sheet of blank paper. The student pastes the picture and the description on a sheet of tagboard. Students can then read their key paragraphs to other students.

Help students make and use bookmarks. For the bookmark activities, one pair of students creates a bookmark and gives it to another pair. The bookmark can have a picture, word, letter, sentence or paragraph on it. The second pair then locates the book page containing the bookmark item and places the bookmark.

Create conversation tables and other areas. Place puzzles, board games, construction materials, puppets with props, and other items of interest in specially designated conversation areas for students to use together.

Utilize cooperative learning resources. Although some cooperative learning activities are written at too high a classroom LIL for young children from poverty homes, books can still provide starting places for ideas that can be modified. A sample resource is ***The Cooperative Learning Guide and Planning Pak for Primary Grades: Thematic Projects and Activities*** by Forte and MacKenzie (1992). This book is available from Incentive Publications. It can also be ordered online from Amazon.com.

Scaffold Comprehension

During adult-child or child-child conversations, comprehension or the lack of it is readily apparent. Comprehension during large-group instruction, however, poses a problem. In the first place, comprehension in a group requires greater focus and attention. Secondly, teachers may not receive clear indications when children do not comprehend.

Comprehending and listening are not the same. Listening is a voluntary focus of attention on a particular sound source. That source could be a tape player, a TV show or a teacher talking. Comprehension is the understanding of the information heard and the corresponding ability to store and use that information. If a time machine could suddenly place you in ancient Greece, you might wander to the street corner to listen to a speaker. In spite of your best efforts at listening, you would not be able to comprehend the speaker unless you spoke ancient Greek. Although comprehension generally requires listening, listening does not guarantee comprehension. A major determinant of what a child is able to comprehend at a particular time is the child's LIS and the extent to which the LIL of instruction matches the LIS of the child.

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Here's an example:

> The educational consultant watched as the kindergarten teacher asked students to put aside their art project and to listen to her information. As she began to talk, one student's hand slowly grasped the scissors and began cutting on the art project. *You need to listen to me right now,* the teacher said while removing the scissors from the student's hand and placing them beside the art materials. Within minutes, as the teacher talked, the student's hand had once again found the scissors and had begun cutting. Once again, the teacher stopped, moved the scissors and corrected the child. At the third offense, the teacher became less calm. *You are not listening,* she said. *You need to learn to listen. When* the children lined up for recess, the educational consultant got the teacher's attention. *You know,* the consultant said, *he was listening. But the art project was talking louder than you were.*

In this case, the teacher could have scaffolded comprehension by helping the student to place the art project out of sight. Because the students had all been engaged in a project, she also might have considered going from table to table and repeating the new information for each group.

As the term "scaffold" implies, teachers can assist comprehension by adding something that supports student understanding. This support can be additional auditory information, visual cues or kinesthetic actions.

Scaffold comprehension by offering auditory support. Sprinkle talk to students with ways to help them connect to meanings. Understand that they may not understand every word you say. Think of your words as "balls thrown toward a basket"—not all will get in, and the number that do get in depend on the skill of the "thrower." Auditory methods that help increase the baskets are interactive methods, repeating and rephrasing, and tying explanations to perceptions.

Build in chances to use interactive methods. Originally used to help language-delayed students learn sentence structure (Lee, Koenigsknecht & Mulhern, 1975), this strategy capitalizes on "the verbal interaction between parent and child, which is the natural setting for language learning" (p. xiv). To use, teachers give a single bit of information or a single sentence, then immediately ask one or more questions. Students all respond simultaneously with the answer (Cole & Cole, 1981). Here's an example:

Teacher: *Jack found the beanstalk. What did Jack find?*
Students: *The beanstalk.*
Teacher: *Who found the beanstalk?*
Students: *Jack.*
Teacher: *What happened?*
Students: *Jack found the beanstalk.*

In addition to being a top clinical speech therapy method, this form of give and take with students improves both comprehension and production skills of students (Pearson & Fielding, 1982).

A variation of the interactive method is to require a physical response to the questions, a technique that was described previously. Students can show paper plates with Yes or No on them, stand up, or engage in some other action. Use of flannelboards or overheads and

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transparencies is another way to enhance interactive methods. Simon (1980) suggests using this method with puppets. For example, one puppet can take an object from the other puppet. The teacher can say, *The (puppet name) has the (object). Who has the (object)? The (puppet name) had the (object). Who had the (object)?* Story circle is an excellent time to try this approach. After each sentence, ask some questions. Encourage a choral response from all students.

Repeat or rephrase to give students a second chance at comprehending. Give important instructions at least two times. Give important instructions at least two times. See, caught your attention, didn't it? Giving instructions twice allows students to work through part of the message, then pick up the rest. Ways to vary the repetitions include changing the emphasis of words or the speed of delivery. You can also give the instructions from two different sides of the room or from the back and the front of the room. A variation of this is to appoint one or two "echoes" whose job it is to repeat instructions. After giving the instruction, point to an "echo," who then repeats.

Students can also be asked to serve as "interpreters" who rephrase information or instructions. For important information, have a conversation "chain" in which one student relays the message to a second student, who tells it to a third student, and so forth, until every student in the class has spoken.

Make language "real" by tying explanations to things that students can directly experience. How much of what you say can students directly connect to something they can see, hear or feel? When possible, start explanations with perceptions rather than with words.

Here's an example:

> The educational consultant watched as the second grade class worked through the reading assignment together. They stopped on the word "pupil." *This is another meaning for the word 'pupil,'* explained the teacher. *It's the part of your eye that works like a camera. It responds to light by getting bigger or smaller. Understand?* As the students hesitantly nodded, the consultant asked the teacher if she could try something. Upon the teacher's agreement, the consultant said, *Find a partner. Find your partner's pupil. That's the part of the eye that looks like this* (and she drew a quick picture on the board). *Now watch carefully.* The consultant turned out the classroom lights. After about ten seconds, she said, *Now watch again,* and turned the lights back on. As children watched their partner's pupils respond to the light, there was a collective "aha" of understanding.

If an explanation cannot be tied to student perception, that might be an indication to set that explanation aside for later. This sentence is from a primary social studies text: "As the years passed, the United States grew. People moved West." Years don't pass each other, countries don't grow the same way that puppies do, and people move by taking a step (as in "move over"). Rather than trying to apply experience to this sentence, a teacher is better off rephrasing and moving on.

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Scaffold comprehension by offering visual support. Most teachers make good use of visual comprehension cues. To help young children from poverty homes increase comprehension, make sure that students can see what you are talking about. All the time. Every time you talk. Take advantage of the variety of ways available to add visual cues to teacher talk.

Have and use a written schedule. Keep the schedule where all students can easily see it. Refer to the schedule frequently. Point out the activity "just finished" and the one you are "about to begin." Name the activities, and read the appropriate line of the schedule. Invite students to perform this function for you.

Give instructions with a model. When giving a sequence of instructions, ask a student or adult to model following each step. For additional comprehension scaffolding, have the instructions written on the board or easel.

Here's an example:

> The educational consultant watched and listened as the kindergarten teacher gave instructions for completing a Halloween activity. Four instructions were written on a nearby easel. Each instruction was illustrated with a small rebus. The teacher pointed to the first instruction and said, *Find the small pumpkin. Look, Mrs. Cooper is finding the small pumpkin.* At the head of the class, the classroom assistant modeled looking at the worksheet, then finding the small pumpkin. The teacher pointed to the second instruction and said, *Then color the small pumpkin orange. Look, Mrs. Cooper is coloring the small pumpkin orange.* The classroom assistant colored the pumpkin orange, then held up the sheet to show the children. The teacher said, *Then cut out the small orange pumpkin. Look, Mrs. Cooper is cutting out the pumpkin.* Mrs. Cooper cut out the small orange pumpkin and showed it to the class. Last, instructed the teacher, *paste the small orange pumpkin on the small circle. Look, Mrs. Cooper found the small circle and she is pasting the pumpkin there!* As Mrs. Cooper completed the instruction process, she held the finished product up, and the class burst into spontaneous applause.

Talk with chalk. Write or draw something to match everything you say. Several resources on this topic are available. Check your local bookstore or library for books with "Talk" and "Chalk" in the title. Adapt books for teaching English. The scripts and examples of lessons can be modified for use by shifting the topic of the stories.

Make use of available overheads and transparencies. In many districts (and corporations), overhead projectors are being phased out and replaced by liquid crystal diode (LCD) projectors that can be hooked up to computers. As a result, this is a terrific time to try to scrounge an overhead projector for ongoing classroom use. Boxes of transparencies for copy machines or computer printers are available at office supply stores. In addition, there are transparencies to write on and accompanying pens. Here are just a few of many possible uses:

- Copy worksheets onto transparencies. Display while giving instructions or demonstrating how to complete the assignment.

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- Copy three-part and four-part sequences of activities. Describe the sequence while students observe.
- Print out colorful illustrations from clip art download sites on the Internet. Describe the picture while students listen.
- Give an instruction *(Draw a big circle and put a line through it),* wait a minute, then draw your version on a transparency.
- After a lesson, say to the students, *Tell me what you learned.* Write their responses on a transparency.

Having comprehension visually scaffolded helps students to learn language while more confidently following classroom instructions.

Scaffold comprehension with kinesthetic support. A flair for the dramatic—yours or your students'—can help create meaningful activities with high comprehension. Students can be "added" or "subtracted" in accordance with worksheet math problems, can be the planets and the sun in science class, or can act out a paragraph that was read silently or aloud. Plan a follow-up reflection time after the activity in which students can talk about what they did and what they learned. Although kinesthetic-based activities can turn into time hogs, they are a great way to wake up a drowsy class and to scaffold comprehension.

Scaffold Expression

Language-building conversations enjoyed by MSES children have the talker and the listener constantly shifting roles. First one person talks while the second listens, then the listening person talks and the talking person listens. This give and take of conversation offers a rich opportunity for children to learn to negotiate meaning—to organize and express ideas so that the listener can understand what the speaker is trying to say. This is a complex act and it takes a great deal of practice. By the time many MSES children arrive at kindergarten, they have had sufficient practice to be able to deal with the types of "thought questions" suggested by many commercial curricula. Young children from LSES homes aren't there yet. They need to start out at a much more basic request for information and move successfully though subsequent stages of expression. While the ideal setting for developing expressive skills is a conversation with a more advanced linguistic partner, the following suggestions can help to create a conversation-like setting when talking with the entire class.

Model how to talk through the answer to a question. If your curriculum requires use of high level "thought questions," ask a question out loud, write the question on the board, then proceed to answer the question. Pause to invite students, as a group, to suggest words here and there. For example, if you are required to ask, *Why do you think Jack sold the cow for beans?* write that question on the board (or transparency), then read it. Say, *This question asks 'why'* (underlining the word), *so I need a reason. Selling a cow for beans is not a very good deal. A cow is worth a lot more than beans, but Jack traded the* ____ (students fill in here). *Something made the beans more valuable. These beans were more valuable that regular beans because they were* ____. *Jack thought that magic beans were worth more than regular beans. He thought that magic beans were a fair trade for the cow. He sold the cow for beans because* ____.

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Offer frequent group question "workouts" at comfortable levels of functioning. Blank, Rose and Berlin (1978a) offer a hierarchy of questions to accompany their four stages of development (see Chapter 2). If possible, hold a Question Time daily, during which students may freely call out answers. Stay at the first level of questions until students are clearly ready to move on, then explain that you will be asking some harder questions. Begin with the first group of questions listed in Chapter 2, then move through the next two groups as students become more capable.

Stay with a "wrong" answer until it is a "right" answer. In a conversation, the speaker has a responsibility to "stay with" a message until it is made clear; for children developing language, a more sophisticated listener takes some of that responsibility by asking questions and guiding the child until the intent of the message is clear. This is a very important language learning step because the child knows what he or she was trying to say. Staying with the thought and assisting the expression of the message provides new language tools for the child to use the next time.

A question session in which the teacher moves on to another child until she hears the correct response does not match the conversation conditions. Some suggestions for ways to help a child who originally provided an incorrect answer are provided by Blank (1983):

- Focus child's attention on particular aspects of the question. If the teacher asks, *What animal eats hay?* and a child says, *Whale,* the teacher can say, *A whale swims in the ocean. Animals that eat hay live on the land.*
- Rephrase the question. If the student says, *Hose,* when the teacher asks, *How do we get a drink of water?* the teacher can say, *When we want a drink of water in the room, we go to a certain place. Show me that place. What is there?*
- Partially answer the question. The teacher can start to answer the question, but leave the last one or two words for the child to complete.

Sometimes teachers move to another child to avoid embarrassing the first child or putting that child on the spot. This leaves the first child's wrong response as a "failure" in the child's mind. A gentle, comfortably paced assist to the correct answer helps the first child and others in the class learn from the process.

Welcome student ideas and other comments. Keep a nearby easel or a place on the board to write out student comments and ideas. Comment positively on ideas and encourage them. Students require frequent opportunities to practice formulating a thought or idea, then working out how to express that thought or idea. In the normal course of conversations, the thought begins with the speaker, who then forms it into a message. Classrooms frequently reverse this normal process by having most of the thought come from the teacher and limiting student expression to predetermined responses. Using methods for scaffolding expression helps students to develop important skills in these areas.

Invite Child Initiative

This is a tough one to try to do in the classroom! Language emerges, however, as children try to express private thoughts and to negotiate personal meanings. The context for these thoughts is a child-directed activity or enterprise. You see the problem: no child-directed activity, no unique thoughts to express, no language development. Admittedly, schools and curricula are

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not high on this particular endeavor. Here are two suggestions to try:

Set aside some time each week for student suggestions. Say to the students, for example, *We have some counting objects and some paper plates. What should we do with them?* Invite ideas and shape them into activities. Give all ideas consideration and write them on the board.

Model and encourage resource use. Keep books, picture dictionaries or other spelling guides, measurement instruments, construction materials and other resources available to students to utilize in the course of their learning. As is appropriate during the day, say, *I think I'll look that word up,* or *I wonder what this book says about that?* or *I need a piece of tape to fix this tear.* When students have a similar dilemma, ask, *Is there something in this room you might use as a resource?* Encourage independent problem solving.

Here's an example:

> The educational consultant watched the developmental kindergarten in amazement. These were children who, just three months previously, had been determined by the district to be "unready" for kindergarten. Now the children were demonstrating independent scholarly behaviors in pursuit of individual learning enterprises. Some children were copying words from a poster, others were looking up some words in a dictionary. Still others were quietly "writing" in journals by drawing pictures of the day's events or tracing over words from previous entries. Suddenly the teacher whispered to the consultant, *I have to take this child to the nurse for his medicine. Can you watch the room for me?* The consultant was not sure she had the skill to keep this magical set of procedures in motion. What if the spell this teacher wove disappeared along with the teacher? She nodded in agreement, gulped as the teacher and child exited, and looked around. Not a single child altered his or her learning behavior! Each child continued in independent pursuits, following personal learning goals. When the consultant later tried to describe the sense of awe she felt to the teacher, the teacher responded, *But this is their room! They love to learn. Why would they want to stop learning?*

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Summing It Up, Again

What's easiest for the teacher is to talk. What's hardest for the student is to learn from hearing talk. Inviting students to participate in the talking by having conversations about content increases learning and language levels at the same time. Adding something additional for the student to hear, providing visual back-ups to comments and information, and introducing some kinesthetic activities help students to develop language while learning the presented content material.

The ideas in this chapter have offered a smorgasbord of language-building classroom experiences. There are more suggestions than any single teacher would wish to use. Is there a way to select certain activities at certain times? Since children go through a series of language

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development stages, are there some language-building experiences that are better to offer than others? Is there a way to order the available language-building classroom experiences into a form of language-based curriculum? The answer to these questions is yes. A recommended curriculum approach is presented in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER 4

What is CurricuLanguage?

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

CurricuLanguage Description

CurricuLanguage is a theory of the relationship between poverty, language and school success

A CurricuLanguage approach assumes responsibility for content and language when planning the education of young children from poverty homes

A CurricuLanguage approach offers clear actions, goals and ways to document results

Language Information Load (LIL) and Language Information Structure (LIS)

The classroom Language Information Load (LIL) results from a combination of curriculum goals, methods, instructions and environment

Teaching goals affect the LIL

Teaching methods affect the LIL

Instructions and explanations affect the LIL

Classroom environment affects the LIL

The student Language Information Structure (LIS) combines pragmatics, syntax and semantics

CurricuLanguage Levels

RED/1 is the level of Encoded Experiences

Providing RED/1 experiences

Matching classroom LIL with student LIS

Suggested schedule

Concluding comments

YELLOW/2 is the level of Scaffolded Conversations

Providing YELLOW/2 experiences

Matching classroom LIL with student LIS

Suggested schedule

Concluding comments

RED/1 and YELLOW/2 are the two levels in the Stage of Here-and-Now Talking

GREEN/3 is the level of Sequenced Experiences

Providing GREEN/3 experiences

Matching classroom LIL with student LIS

Suggested schedule

Concluding comments

GREEN/3 is the single level in the Transitional Stage

BLUE/4 is the level of Decontextualized Discussions

Providing BLUE/4 experiences

Matching classroom LIL with student LIS

Suggested schedule

Concluding comments

VIOLET/5 is the level of Decontextualized Analysis

Providing VIOLET/5 experiences

Matching classroom LIL with student LIS

Suggested schedule

Concluding comments

BLUE/4 and VIOLET/5 are at the There-and-Then Stage of Instruction and Discussion

CurricuLanguage Use

Identifying the current LIS and evaluating results use the same procedures

Observation and anecdotal records offer the simplest approach

Language samples provide clear documentation of student expressive skill level

Use key skills to divide students into groups

Use *Primary Success* to directly document student LIS

Use information on student LIS to guide curricular and classroom modifications

CurricuLanguage Projects

K-TALK activities taught science, math and social studies goals along with language

- K-TALK results showed that students developed language skills at an accelerated rate
- Teacher comments indicated that K-TALK students learned content at an accelerated rate
- Classroom observation showed children who were eager learners who felt good about themselves and about learning
- Widespread use of K-TALK showed varying results

K-READ presented kindergarten reading activities appropriate to development

The CurricuLanguage Model was adopted for a Creighton School District project

Say you want to go from New York to California. There are a number of options, some more practical than others. Walking, riding a bicycle, riding a motorcycle, taking a bus, taking a train, taking an airplane and driving a personal vehicle are all feasible. Swimming and sending yourself through the telephone lines are not feasible options. Each of the feasible options carries its own set of benefits and requirements. The trip is the goal; the options for getting there are the method. The point is that, once the decision is made to go from New York to California, use of some feasible method to get there is implicit in the decision *whether or not it is clearly specified.*

Now, assume you are in charge of 1,000 people who will make the trip and you have secretly decided they can go only if they drive a personal vehicle. All 1,000 start out but, at the first checkpoint, those without personal vehicles are turned away. They are not allowed to make the trip, not because they can't get to California, but because they can't get to California *using the required method.*

An educational system that specifies learning goals but keeps learning methods at the highest level of classroom LIL risks turning away young students from poverty homes who could also "make the trip" if only alternative learning methods were available. CurricuLanguage offers those alternative methods in a coherent educational plan.

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CurricuLanguage Description

As discussed in Chapter 2, the view of language learning began to shift in the 1980s. Increased awareness of the important role of language in the classroom led to increased advice to talk with students (Blank, 1983; Heath, 1996; Cazden, 1996; Tough, 1979, 1981, 1985; Weiner & Creighton, 1987; Wells, 1986). When this advice was followed, students from poverty homes progressed in language and academic subjects (Cazden, 1996; Despain & Simon, 1987; Weiner & Creighton, 1987). Despite clear-cut and repeated opinions about the necessity of language skills for learning success, decisions of educational policymakers continued to exclude systematic ways to meet these needs within the regular primary classroom. In fact, the trend appeared to be the removal of those language learning opportunities that still existed. Britton (1993) had this experience in Great Britain:

> In June 1988, setting out what seemed to me the opinion of experienced English teachers, and in opposition to the prevailing tendencies of Government policies, I included the following claim. Studies of language acquisition and development have indicated that the routes by which individual children acquire competence vary considerably. Indeed, it is the *child's intention* that above all releases the tacit powers that lead to mastery: Freedom on the part of teachers to provide suitable activities adapted to particular children's needs, and allowing for individual choice, therefore becomes crucial. . . . As things stand at the moment, the specification of teaching objectives and the attendant methods of assessing the degree of success in achieving them have been made statutory—laid down by law at the behest of the Department of Education and

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> Science. Teachers in our schools no longer possess the freedom to suit educational provision to particular needs. (pp. 7-8)

The information about the crucial role of language and language development opportunities was apparently not in a form that could be readily used by the educational decision-making community. In the first place, it was spread across a number of books and articles by different authors. Second, there was no single clear-cut set of procedures that a teacher could choose to follow. Third, there was a lack of guidelines for setting language goals or evaluating progress in that area. Heath's comment, made in the 1980s, is still generally true today:

> Intuitively, most teachers are aware of the different language background experiences children bring to school, but few means exist for providing teachers with information about these differences and their implications for classroom practice. (1983, p. 41)

Last, no matter how compelling the case for language development, the purpose of schools is to teach content. The student acquisition of content is the standard by which schools are evaluated. Any suggestion for addressing language needs of children from poverty homes must first credit the responsibility of schools to teach the curriculum.

The information in Chapter 3 provided a wide variety of ideas for modifying classroom practice in order to adjust to differences in language abilities and background of students. The purpose of the CurricuLanguage information in this chapter is to offer a structure within which the diversity of quality information about language might be organized into teaching methods.

CurricuLanguage is a theory of the relationship between poverty, language and school success

This theory is composed of five assertions:

1. The difference in learning between young LSES and MSES students primarily reflects the difference in decontextualized language skills between these two groups.
2. This difference, a consequence of differences in family interactions, is observable and measurable.
3. Perceived learning difficulties of young children from poverty homes arise due to a mismatch between the contextualized language needs of LSES children and the decontextualized language expectations of traditional primary classrooms.
4. The contextualized language/learning requirements of young LSES children can be addressed and modified through informed changes in methods of curriculum delivery.
5. When young LSES children attain and maintain MSES levels of decontextualized language skills, school performance between these two groups is indistinguishable.

In essence, the CurricuLanguage theory proposes that appropriate curricular modifications can make learning difficulties of LSES children go away within the first four to five years of school.

One method for modifying curriculum delivery methods is use of the CurricuLanguage model. Within this structure, several methods of curriculum delivery are ordered from most concrete (contextualized) to most abstract (decontextualized). For each level, child language abilities and child learning needs are identified. To help children from poverty homes succeed, teachers can use a CurricuLanguage approach to:

- Identify the language levels of children.

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- Provide the types of classroom interactions needed.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the interactions.

A CurricuLanguage approach assumes responsibility for content and language when planning the education of young children from poverty homes

With a CurricuLanguage approach, the educational system assumes responsibility for teaching the necessary language skills to children from poverty homes. Interactions based on CurricuLanguage support the acquisition of content goals and language skills at the same time. If children from poverty homes lack these skills and if school success requires these skills, it makes sense for schools to teach these skills.

Due to the nature of language learning, student language development does not require a separate "language development" block of scheduled time. Instead, necessary skills can be taught as a result of careful selection of content teaching activities. When there is a match between student LIS and classroom LIL, children will learn content and language at the same time. By making language levels of children and language expectations of the curriculum explicit, a CurricuLanguage approach allows teachers to make the decisions which create the best match between child abilities and classroom expectations. When lessons carry an LIL at the child's LIS, language learning happens along with the ongoing instructional activities. As children learn content, they also gain crucial language learning experiences. This happens because language is always present in ongoing classroom interactions. When that language is at the level needed by the child, the child will continue to develop language skills while learning curricular content. With a CurricuLanguage approach, the role of the educational system is to:

- Make the LIL of the learning activity or goal explicit.
- Determine the Language Information Structure (LIS) of the students.
- Document any mismatch between LIL of the classroom and LIS of the students.
- Modify the LIL of classroom activities to match the LIS of the students.
- Continue to match LIL to LIS as the students' LIS increases.

Through execution of these steps, language and content are taught at the same time. The content mostly forms the goal of the activity or interaction, and the language level is primarily represented by the method or activity used to teach the content. This is a fluid, dynamic process. In response to appropriate levels of LIL, children will continue to increase their own LIS. This language growth requires that the LIL be increased to meet new child learning abilities. This need for ongoing modification in turn requires that the teacher be aware of ways to increase or decrease the classroom LIL to meet the student LIS.

A CurricuLanguage approach offers clear actions, goals and ways to document results

The emphasis on student test scores and teaching to the objective is squeezing out opportunities to do things in the classroom because "children need these experiences." In order for essential language development to remain a part of the curriculum, teachers must document

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both the need for the experience and the benefits to the student. CurricuLanguage allows both. The three components which comprise a CurricuLanguage approach are the classroom Language Information Load (LIL), the student Language Information Structure (LIS) and the Language Levels of the CurricuLanguage Model. In the CurricuLanguage Levels, child Language Information Structure (LIS) is divided into five levels of ability, which are then matched to five levels of LIL. Productive teaching interactions are identified at each of the five levels. The goal becomes one of helping children to move from one identified level of CurricuLanguage to a higher level. Results can be documented through observation or direct testing.

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Language Information Load (LIL) and Language Information Structure (LIS)

The goal of the CurricuLanguage approach is to maintain a match between the classroom LIL and the child's LIS as curricular content is presented in the classroom setting. This goal can be facilitated through an understanding of the components of LIL and LIS.

The classroom Language Information Load (LIL) results from a combination of curriculum goals, methods, instructions and environment

For a quick estimate of classroom LIL, video tape a lesson, then watch it with the sound turned off. That indicates how much of the lesson gets through without depending on language. The more the lesson depends on language and the more abstract the language, the greater the LIL. Classrooms with greater LIL have more activities centered around talking and listening and fewer activities centered around doing and discovering.

Teaching goals affect the LIL. The words in a curricular goal suggest specific methods for teaching and evaluating whether a child has attained a goal. Verbs are especially suggestive. *Explore, identify* and *observe* invite discovery-type activities with real objects. The LIL of discovery activities is low. Verbs like *discuss, describe, tell* and *answer* signal a talking/listening activity with associated higher LIL. The highest LIL is indicated by words like *predict, hypothesize* and *explain.* These actions impose a high language demand on students.

Teaching methods affect the LIL. A chosen teaching activity can be highly contextualized, highly decontextualized, or anywhere in between. As discussed in Chapter 2, decontextualization refers to the level of abstractness of a lesson and the corresponding learner requirements for processing language removed from the environment. Contextualization refers to the level of concreteness. A sample highly contextualized classroom activity is one in which children explore the different patterns of wallpaper samples while a teacher notices and describes their perceptions. In contextualized activities, the language follows the student actions, describing student actions or discoveries. A sample highly decontextualized classroom activity is one in which the teacher reads a lesson, then asks students about what he or she read. Decontextualized activities are those where the objects and events referred to are not present in the room.

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Activities that are perceptual-verbal—talk about things children see—are more contextualized; verbal-verbal activities, in which children respond to teacher talk, are more decontextualized. The more a child needs decontextualized language skills to understand and participate in the activity, the higher the LIL.

Instructions and explanations affect the LIL. Speed of talking, sentence length and complexity, vocabulary, degree of repetition and degree of scaffolding all contribute to the classroom LIL. As discussed in Chapter 3, scaffolding helps learners function at a higher LIL. Just as an adult can scaffold an inexperienced communicator's conversation, teachers can build student ability to function at a higher LIL by bringing in props to support understanding. Providing a model who demonstrates instructions, using overhead projectors and transparencies to demonstrate a worksheet, and referring frequently to posters are all ways a teacher can scaffold student comprehension. Teachers can scaffold student responses by verbalizing the thought process behind a wrong answer or by helping a student to develop a more correct answer.

Classroom environment affects the LIL. When classroom talking is about objects and events not present in the room or about abstract concepts, the resulting talk is decontextualized and more difficult for students to process. A classroom environment rich in objects for discussion and materials for individual student projects offers opportunities for more contextualized discussions. In addition, the presence of distracting or annoying sounds can increase classroom LIL. Playground noise, heating or cooling systems, construction noise or other sounds can make it difficult for students to hear or to comprehend the language available in the classroom.

Together, the components that create the classroom LIL determine how demanding the classroom language requirements will be. Generally, the higher the language requirements, the less likely that young children from poverty homes will be able to meet them. In order to benefit from classroom instruction, a child must have a Language Information Structure (LIS) at the level of the classroom LIL. For purposes of instructional decision-making, the classroom LIL can be divided into the five levels discussed in a later section.

The student Language Information Structure (LIS) combines pragmatics, syntax and semantics

The student LIS consists of a central pragmatics-based organizing theme with less central contributing components. The central theme is the student level of development along the contextualized/decontextualized continuum. The contributing components are vocabulary, syntax, and the interaction between vocabulary and syntax. The overall result of higher levels of student LIS is the ability to convert words—heard or written—into a set of recalled perceptions common to all students in the class. Consider this sentence: *Undaunted, the old sea dog forged into the swirling terror.* Do you have a mental picture that reading this sentence created? Did it contain any or all of these elements: ocean, ship, storm, scowling face, rain slicker, rain, clouds, waves, peg leg, craggy face, sunburned face, whiskers, lurching boat, squinting eyes, frowning face, sails or large captain's wheel? Now, look back at the sentence. None of these elements is said directly. Where did they come from? How did you know that the "sea dog" was not an animal?

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How did you know that "forged" had nothing to do with metal? How did you create a picture very similar to the picture created by many others? This is the magic of your own LIS. You and everyone else who got a similar mental picture had similar experiences which were stored in similar ways. This allowed you over time to build some amazing language skills. The LIS is developmental; children acquire the necessary skills over time. For purposes of instructional decision-making, the LIS can be divided into five levels.

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CurricuLanguage Levels

The five CurricuLanguage Levels combine the LIL and the LIS into a single coherent model of classroom interactions. Each level contains information about student capabilities at that level and the matching learning experiences for students. Both the descriptions of the levels and the suggested activities follow the language development stages discussed in Chapter 2. The primary determinant of each level is the relative contextualization or decontextualization of the activities. For ease in recognition, each level is identified by a color, a number and a description.

RED/1 is the level of Encoded Experiences

At the RED/1 Level, children primarily interact with objects while the teacher or another adult "encodes" their ongoing activity. Children are not asked to talk. They are not expected to benefit from questions. Everything being talked about (objects and actions) is immediately present in the classroom. In this "here-and-now" language setting, children can comprehend what is being said to them by "reading" the surrounding environment. Children can succeed at this level without verbalizing at all. They are free to explore interesting materials as long as they follow rules for appropriate materials use.

Done correctly, interactions at RED/1 can be glorious. It's almost possible to hear the collective sigh of relief when overstressed learners are finally given something at which they can succeed. The only instruction is to explore and discover; teachers are on hand to quickly comment to an individual child, then move on to the next child.

It's amazing how many good things can result from such a low-stress activity!

- Child and teacher connect in positive ways that validate the child's ability to learn. Freedom from the "pressure of action" allows the teacher to focus on the child's interests and to put the child's actions and thoughts into words. As a result, teacher attention can be devoted to the attempt to achieve important mutual understanding (Wells, 1986).
- The hands-on experiences and the absence of threat creates the setting for the Integrated Thematic Instruction (ITI) Rubric Stage I (Kovalik, 1993). This is the entry level for making the student's learning environment brain-compatible.
- By commenting on discoveries students make, teachers actually get student learning engines performing at top capacity. They are letting students know that they can succeed and that their independent thinking skills are valued.
- Verbalizing as a child works is an effective way to extend a child's attention to a task (Weiner & Creighton, 1987).

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- Key classroom vocabulary is effectively introduced in RED/1 interactions. Bloom and Lahey describe language learning as the process of making connections between thought, words and the ways that words are used. In order to make this important connection, a child must be provided with "tangible experiences with objects and events, linguistic forms and interpersonal interactions" (1978, p. 571). In other words, the child has to do or see something and hear the words that go with the child's perception.
- Other aspects of language are developed as well. After a 15-year study of language skills and school achievement, Wells (1986) observed, "We found a clear relationship between the children's rate of progress in language learning and the amount of conversation they experienced. . . . What seems to be more important is that, to be most helpful, the child's experience of conversation should be in a one-to-one situation in which the adult is talking about matters that are of interest and concern to the child" (p. 44).
- And, not surprisingly, talking about what the child is doing has also been identified as the single most important factor affecting children's eventual intellectual levels (Carew, 1980). RED/1 experiences offer a powerful method for helping children from poverty homes to begin building essential "cognitive structures" (Payne, 1998).

Providing RED/1 experiences:

Curricular goals. Few traditional curricular goals can be directly taught at this level, but this level lays the foundation for acquisition of goals at later levels. For example, "Focus attention on the speaker without interruption" is a language arts goal that requires that the student have previous RED/1 experiences, either at home or at school. Here are some curricular goals that can be taught directly at RED/1:

- Acquire the meaning of new vocabulary words.
- Match objects in a one-to-one correspondence (provided that is what the student decides to do with them).
- Compare similarities and differences among objects.
- Sort objects from the environment according to one characteristic.
- Know and observe rules of the classroom.

Suggested materials. Almost any real-world material that is safe and interesting to children may be used at this level. Not all children need to use the same material at the same time. The choice of items will affect the vocabulary which the children will hear. For science, use containers of rocks, seeds or shells. Have packets of good garden loam complete with magnifying glasses for closer inspection. Magnets with items to grab, scales with items to weigh, rulers with items to measure, or a tub of water with items that sink and float invite quality exploration and attendant thinking. For language arts, collect items that exemplify basic concepts. A flannelboard with geometric objects leads to description of shapes, position (*under/over, above/below, beside, high/low*), color and number. Flannelboard story sets offer characters to describe (but don't try the story yet). Wallpaper samples invite inspection of narrow/wide designs, and a collection of buttons provides opportunities of arrangement in rows and columns as well as a study of similarities and differences. Some ideas for math materials are listed on page 68. Counting objects, beans or rice all offer quality experiences with quantification as well. If objects are not

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CurricuLanguage Model: RED/1 Level

THE HERE-AND-NOW STAGE OF EXPLORATION AND DISCOVERY							
Level & Description	**Child Indicators**	**Child Academic Ability**	**Recommended Educational Interaction**	**Sample Interactions**	**Educational Suggestions**	**Rationale for Suggestions**	**Other Information**
RED/1 Encoded Experiences Students learn by hearing language appropriate to observed actions and objects. • Language directly maps sensory experiences. • The student needs to see what is being talked about. 76	The student: • Can independently explore and arrange materials. • Is mostly silent. • May be disruptive during group time. • May express frustration by kicking or hitting.	Preferred learning style is direct exploration. The student: • Recognizes words. • Explores materials. • Learns personal perceptions are valued. • Talks about what is directly experienced. • Needs ongoing talk about his/her actions. • Needs instructions to be given 1-to-1.	**Hearing WHILE Doing** The student explores materials and makes discoveries while an adult describes actions. The adult moves from child to child holding individual "conversations" (even if the child chooses to remain silent). The focus is on avoiding questions. The child needs to hear the language that goes with his or her action or realization.	**Math:** Investigating parquetry pieces, putting counting items in egg carton sections. **Science:** Exploring a variety of rocks, seeds, shells, etc. **Reading:** Using magnetic letters, a cookie sheet and picture cards with words.	Rely on interesting materials to provide the learning motivation. Keep instructions to a minimum. Encourage independent exploration and discovery. Convey excitement and interest at child's discoveries. Provide rich variety of materials for exploration. Use resources that invite manipulation and use in a variety of ways. Arrange to move from student to student, holding quick individual conversations (even if the child remains silent). Use "information talk" instead of "control talk." Arrange for daily individual book sharing. Invite older students to be tutors.	Hearing actions and interests described is a key step in language and cognitive development. Children from more privileged homes receive this "language bath" (or information talk) from birth to age 2. Children from poverty homes miss out on this step and hear mostly control talk.	Given 1 hour a day of these kinds of activities, most children at RED/1 move to YELLOW/2 within 4 to 6 weeks. For children who do not progress, suspect untreated ear infections. When planning at RED/1, develop objectives with these verbs: • Discover • Explore • Name • Learn vocabulary 77

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available, a second choice is magazine or calendar pictures and a third choice is old newspapers (with a highlighter for marking interesting things).

Appropriate interactions. Set up a time in which all children are engaged with interesting materials. Let each child independently explore the materials. Move from child to child and comment in specific positive ways to individual children about what each child is seeing, doing or thinking. This is not easy. Some teachers can't do it. They need to ask questions or tell children what to do with the materials. And, some children can't do it. Given a set of interesting materials, they will sit until they are told something specific to do. This is very sad. An individual child not sure what to do can be invited to walk with the teacher and observe the other children. For more than one child not sure what to do, provide general guidance such as, *Look through the materials and see if you notice anything interesting about them.* Another invitation to interaction with the materials is, *This a chance for you to notice interesting things about these (objects). You may move them around if you wish.* A teacher unable to provide comments that follow the interests of the child can sometimes benefit from a demonstration or a videotape.

Sample RED/1 activity. Give each student a magazine and a large index card. Invite individual students to cut pictures out and paste them on the index card. Tell them to cover the entire card. Talk to each student briefly about actions (*You're looking at many different pictures*), selections (*You picked a tractor*) and general observations (*You have room for at least one more picture*).

Helpful resources. Educational Productions offers several training videotapes on how to provide ongoing talk to match child actions and interests. One is ***Oh, Say What They See***. Their tapes are primarily for teaching individuals to work with preschoolers, but the concepts are the same. Contact them at www.edpro.com or 800-950-4949.

Also, ECL Publications has a set of folders called ***Motivating Acquisition of Pragmatics with Preschoolers*** that gives step-by-step lessons on language-building interactions. Contact them at www.eclpublications.com or 877-974-4560. For additional reasons to offer RED/1 interactions, see ***Good Teaching Practices for Four- and Five-Year-Olds*** (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1986).

Matching classroom LIL with student LIS. RED/1 activities are a good place to start when unsure of the student LIS. The one-to-one interactions allow a teacher to get to know individual students and their capabilities. Too much RED/1 is better than too little because students will raise the one-to-one conversations to their own level.

Students have a RED/1 LIS when they:

- Are learning a new language.
- Are mostly silent.
- Are disruptive during group time.
- Express frustration by kicking or hitting.
- Seem lost or confused by group instruction.

Language behaviors associated with a RED/1 LIS are:

- Speaks in three- to four-word "sentences" which may lack small function words.
- Describes pictures by naming objects in the pictures.
- Uses incomplete vocabulary for body parts, vehicles, foods, etc.

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- Responds to questions by giving single words, shrugging, or pointing.

Activities have a RED/1 LIL when:

- The learning style is direct exploration.
- The student learns words, explores materials and discovers that his/her own perceptions are valid.
- The student hears ongoing talk about his/her actions or interests.
- The student is not asked to talk.
- Instructions are given one-to-one.

Suggested schedule. Children graduate themselves from RED/1 to the next level when they begin talking. Their silence indicates a need for continued RED/1 interactions. English-speaking kindergarten children from poverty homes can benefit from up to four weeks of activities at this level. Children who are in the process of learning English may benefit from longer periods at this level, and older English-speaking children may need less time. Learning disabled and other special needs students may require a full year at this level. Offering RED/1 experiences and materials will not slow the development of more capable students, because they will use the independent discovery and one-to-one conversational opportunities to make discoveries and have conversations at their own level.

Concluding comments. Independent exploration remains a quality learning experience all through life. Consider the stamp or coin collector, or the scientist looking through the microscope. The ability to look, to wonder and to enjoy learning can all start at this level.

YELLOW/2 is the level of Scaffolded Conversations

At the YELLOW/2 Level, children learn to develop meaning by engaging in conversations. Students begin this level having conversations with adults and end when they can work in pairs with each other. Children lead the conversations by selecting the topic and deciding what to say; the adult supports the conversation by listening to what the child is trying to say and responding to the content of the child's message. These conversations begin when the children start them, not when the teacher decides the child should talk. Children not interested in initiating conversations with teachers may not yet be ready for YELLOW/2. For a member of the pair who prefers silence return to RED/1 interactions.

Adult-child conversations at YELLOW/2 are a joy for children. They have someone who cares enough to listen to what they are trying to say. As adults help children to put their thoughts into words, children develop more thoughts and connect them to the ongoing activities.

Carefully listening and attempting to comprehend what the child is trying to say is a powerful teaching strategy:

- It is an excellent method for helping children acquire essential pragmatic, syntactic and vocabulary skills (Hart, 1982).
- Teachers can demonstrate the kinds of quality listening skills they wish the children to develop (Tough, 1985).
- Teacher-child dialogues help children to establish thinking skills and problem-solving attitudes (Tough, 1985).

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- Narrative skills, upon which much of school work is based, emerge in the context of well-developed successful experience with dialogues (Feagans, 1982).
- Helping children learn to extend meaning over a number of turns develops the ability to develop meaning across several sentences. This "text processing" is a critical preliteracy skill (Sulzby, 1986).
- Conversations also keep learning at the level at which children need it. Children at YELLOW/2 cannot yet benefit from group presentations or explanations (Blank, 1983).

Providing YELLOW/2 experiences:

Curricular goals. Few traditional curricular goals can be directly taught at this level, but this level lays the foundation for acquisition of goals at later levels. For example, "Engages in discussions by sharing ideas with others" is a language arts goal that has, at its beginning, a caring adult encouraging a child to share ideas with him or her. Here are some curricular goals that can be taught directly at YELLOW/2:

- Use a variety of words to express feeling and ideas.
- Use oral language in a variety of situations.
- Use vocabulary to compare objects.
- Form groups by matching and sorting objects.

Suggested materials. Any RED/1 materials are excellent for this level. In addition, vinyl cling activities (such as Colorforms®) lead to quality conversations. Construction items like Legos or molding clay call for conversations about plans and problems, and containers and objects enhance discussions of quantity and measurement.

Appropriate interactions. YELLOW/2 Level interactions emerge naturally from the RED/1 opportunities. As soon as a child responds to teacher comments with a comment, that child is at YELLOW/2. After a week or so of talking with adults, children can be paired so adults can first converse with students and later coach their conversations with each other. For example, a pair of students can be allowed to select a materials and told to, *Find something interesting to tell us about this.* As children investigate the material, the teacher comments on their discoveries until they initiate conversation. Then the teacher converses with the students. The goal for the teacher is to find ways of extending the child's meaning rather than imposing the teacher's own ideas of what should be conversed. This is not easy. Teachers are so accustomed to imposing their own conversational topics that sometimes they are not even aware of what they are doing. A teacher unsure how to extend meaning can start by restating what the child has said. For example,

Child: *I put this around, see?*

Teacher: *Yes, I see. You took the train and moved it around the triangles.*

Sample YELLOW/2 activity. Give pairs of students 50 to 100 assorted parquetry shapes and colors. Tell them to figure out together how to divide the pieces into two stacks. Children will initially start out silently, often with one child taking over the materials and the other child watching. Begin talking with the children about the sorting choice. For example, *I see you decided to put all the red pieces in one stack.* When the child responds (by saying, for example, *Yep, I'm gonna put the red ones here*), say, *That's good information. Tell that to your partner.* Eventually, watch to see if students can maintain the conversations with you and then with partners for three turns.

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CurricuLanguage Model: YELLOW/2 Level

THE HERE-AND-NOW STAGE OF EXPLORATION AND DISCOVERY							
Level & Description	**Child Indicators**	**Child Academic Ability**	**Recommended Educational Interaction**	**Sample Interactions**	**Educational Suggestions**	**Rationale for Suggestions**	**Other Information**
YELLOW/2 Scaffolded Conversations Students learn by negotiating meaning with adults or other learners. They talk with others about observed actions and objects. • Language categorizes sensory experiences. • The student needs to talk about personal perceptions and discoveries.	The student: • Can work in student pairs. • Can follow visually scaffolded group instructions. • Converses 1-to-1. • May talk at the wrong times in class. • May talk off topic during group.	Preferred learning style is conversation combined with direct perception. The student: • Matches materials. • Converses about own actions and perceptions. • Sorts objects by perceptual characteristics. • Learns new words and concepts from conversations. • Talks about what the student is thinking and seeing. • Needs opportunities to talk through thoughts and perceptions (to negotiate meaning).	**Talking WHILE Doing** Students work in pairs in accordance with very general instructions. They use the same materials as those used at the RED/1 Level.	**Math:** With parquetry pieces, ask student pairs to see how many they can fit onto index cards of various sizes. Help them to count the pieces. **Science:** Students sort science materials by size, color or other dimensions they suggest. **Reading:** Students look through the newspaper, magazines or other print material to find and highlight that week's letter. They use bookmarks prepared with a picture and a word to go on "word hunts" through library books.	Pair more- and less-able students to use materials in response to general, unsequenced instructions: match the words and pictures, count out the pieces for these math problems, find the words on these bookmarks, make two piles of seeds, etc. Keep learning materials at a concrete, manipulable level. When possible, use real-world objects. Label and reinforce student-initiated discoveries and accomplishments. Have clear rules for pair "talking time." Encourage dialogue while looking through materials and making discoveries. Move from pair to pair. Select one pair each day for wrap-up demonstration and description.	Working in pairs and making discoveries together is a form of collaborative learning. Children from more privileged homes can talk 1-to-1 about learning things. Children from poverty homes often miss this important developmental step because the only place they are engaged with learning materials is at school–where much instruction is group discussion or silent use of worksheets.	Given 1 hour a day of these kinds of activities, most children at YELLOW/2 are ready to move to GREEN/3 Level activities within 16 weeks. When planning at YELLOW/2, develop objectives with these verbs: • Sort • Categorize • Expand concepts

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Helpful resources. Talk for Learning and Teaching (Tough, 1979) and ***Talking and Learning*** (Tough, 1985) provide very clear examples of quality teacher-child interactions. ***Teaching Learning in the Preschool: A Dialogue Approach*** (Blank, 1983) examines dialogues that are most helpful to children. Since all of these books are out of print, check with your local library or try using an out-of-print locator service.

Matching classroom LIL with student LIS. YELLOW/2 activities can be added to existing RED/1 activities as students begin initiating conversations with the teacher and other adults. Asking closed-ended questions of students (*What is that?* and *What color is it?*) will not hasten this process and will probably delay it. Following the RED/1 procedures for talking to students about what interests them will lead to students initiating conversations. LSES children are at high risk of language and subsequent educational delays due to untreated, chronic ear infections. A Level 1 LIS child who does not begin initiating conversation after four weeks of RED/1 interactions fits the profile of children with active, untreated ear infections and, if possible, should be checked for this condition. If not enough adults are available, beginning Level 2 LIS students can be paired with other students at LIS Level 4 or above. The higher LIS students can offer scaffolding services similar to those provided by an adult.

Students have a YELLOW/2 LIS when they:

- Can express thoughts and ideas one-to-one with the teacher's scaffolding.
- Can talk with the teacher about things they are seeing or doing.
- Tend to make off-topic comments during group.
- Eagerly raise hands, but say, *I forgot*, when called on.
- Enjoy matching or sorting hands-on materials.
- Demonstrate difficulty sequencing materials.

Language behaviors associated with a YELLOW/2 LIS are:

- Uses complete simple sentences.
- Demonstrates increasing use of longer complete sentences.
- Describes pictures with short unconnected sentences.
- Initiates conversation with adults.
- Has vocabulary for body parts, vehicles, foods, etc.
- Demonstrates increasing use of adjectives and basic concepts.
- Responds to questions by giving brief answers.

Activities have a YELLOW/2 LIL when:

- The learning style is categorization of real-world objects.
- Students are helped to express their own thoughts and ideas.
- Students work paired with higher-level LIS students or student pairs get conversations scaffolded by the teacher.

Suggested schedule. Children are ready to move beyond this level when they begin independently having content-based conversations with each other. This means that they have learned from their adult models how to talk about classroom interests and can now do so with peers. English-speaking kindergarten children from poverty homes can benefit from up to 16 weeks of activities at this level. Children learning English may need this level available to them for an

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entire school year. Older children may need less time at this level. Learning disabled and other special needs students may require a full year at this level.

Concluding comments. Sharing personal thoughts and ideas is a skill valued throughout a student's educational career. This ability is the foundation for writing assignments, essay tests and discussion group participation. The confidence in having something of value to say and the technical skills for saying it clearly can all start at this level.

RED/1 and YELLOW/2 are the two levels in the Stage of Here-and-Now Talking

Children with an LIS of RED/1 or YELLOW/2 thrive in an environment of real world objects where the talk is about what they are doing and discovering. This contextualized here-and-now talking teaches basic concepts and vocabulary while helping to build language skills that will be required to meet later curricular demands. Placed in the appropriate learning environment, young children from poverty homes learn with astonishing speed while building important self-confidence. Teachers tempted to move too quickly from provision of experiences at this stage should remember Blank's warning that, "Verbal explanation isolated from its concrete referents floods the child precisely with the material he is least capable of handiing" (1983, p. 110). Having the learning and language at the here-and-now level is a crucial step for young children from poverty homes. Within a few months, students can emerge from this stage and begin the process of transitioning to decontextualized language.

GREEN/3 is the level of Sequenced Experiences

At GREEN/3, children begin transitioning from the immediate contextualized environment of here-and-now language to the removed decontextualized environment of the type of there-and-then language needed for school success. This important transition begins with giving children the opportunity to use the same language in two different settings. First, the child experiences here-and-now language about sequences of ongoing events. Second, the child has an opportunity to discuss the events in small groups. At GREEN/3, children's language begins to take on the characteristics of narrative skills, described in Chapter 2. Children begin to develop skill with sequencing events and the related ability to rearrange events in time and space. They can, with help, participate in and enjoy puppet shows and other dramatic events. They begin to get meaning from several sentences together instead of just one sentence. Their turns as listeners get longer as they learn to share the "speaker" turn with members of the group and the teacher (who generally takes the longest speaker turns). They can also react to stories with feeling and adhere to the rules for group participation.

Done with skill and patience, interactions at GREEN/3 can allow students to begin demonstrating those behaviors expected by educators. They can follow group instruction, work in accordance with a sequence of instructions and stay on-topic during group discussions. Little wonder that teachers who start with children at RED/1 greet this level with choruses of, "Green, glorious green!"

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This is a wonderful level for students as well. A traditionally organized classroom is less confusing for a child at GREEN/3 than it is for children at lower levels.

- The skills at this level have been identified as those essential to reading success (Blank, 1982; Olson, 1977; Silvaroli & Wheelock, 1980; Snow, 1983; Sulzby, 1986; Wells, 1986).
- Children develop "story grammar," a set of expectations about how a story works (Stein, 1979). This skill is necessary to comprehend any information presented in a story-like organization such as science lessons, social studies lessons and math lessons.
- Students can follow presentations on a single topic and make appropriate comments (Milosky, 1987).

Providing GREEN/3 experiences:

Curricular goals. GREEN/3 is the first level of traditional curricular goals. The following goals that require sequencing or comprehension of sequenced material can be taught at GREEN/3:

- Name characters in a story.
- Recall and tell a three-part story.
- Participate in role playing and dramatic play.
- Arrange pictures or numbers sequentially.
- Construct words from sequences of letters.
- Select appropriate math operation for simple story problems.
- Retell steps in simple science demonstration or experiment.

Suggested materials. Photos, flannelboard sets and props for dramatic play can replace the real-word material of RED/1 and YELLOW/2. Also large posters, lists, schedules, filmstrips, slides and anything else students can see provide the necessary support for GREEN/3 interactions. Sequenced pictures are especially good, either the commercial variety or ones that students draw themselves. A prized instrument is the new disposable Polaroid camera which students can use to document a particular activity, guide a discussion of the activity, and then later create an illustrated book of the activity.

Appropriate interactions. Help students to tie sequences of activities to the words that describe these sequences. Set up opportunities for students to do something, then discuss it. Whenever possible during the day, talk with students about what they are doing and what they just did. Use phrases containing the words *before, after, while,* etc. Take advantage of unusual (positive) events to review by saying, *Let's talk about what just happened* and *What might happen now?* Write and/or illustrate student responses and review them frequently. Make use of routines (Snow, Dubber & Blauw, 1983) by presenting the same material for several days, making increasingly more difficult demands. Maintain reference sets of sequenced cards for students to order and discuss. Invite students to illustrate sequences of their own activities and to dictate descriptions to accompany them. Use the suggestions on scaffolding comprehension from Chapter 3 to keep student involvement and learning at a high level.

Sample GREEN/3 activity. Arrange students in pairs. Give each pair a set of one-inch wooden cubes of various colors. Ask each pair to create a repeating pattern. Then ask them to switch places with a different pair of students and to duplicate the existing pattern that the

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CurricuLanguage Model: GREEN/3 Level

THE TRANSITIONAL STAGE OF ACTION AND REFLECTION							
Level & Description	**Child Indicators**	**Child Academic Ability**	**Recommended Educational Interaction**	**Sample Interactions**	**Educational Suggestions**	**Rationale for Suggestions**	**Other Information**
GREEN/3 Sequenced Experiences Students learn by engaging in activities, then reflecting on what they did and learned. • Language used during experiences is used to discuss them later. • The student needs to have participated in what is being talked about.	The student: • Can sequence events (3 verbs). • Can learn in small groups. • Can follow procedures for group. • Relates two pictures as events in a single story. • May be baffled by *Why* questions. • May be confused by detailed explanations.	Preferred learning style is experience followed by discussion. The student: • Identifies similarities of objects. • Follows short flannelboard story. • Describes previous actions. • Talks about what happened first, next and last. • Responds in several sentences at a time. • Follows a series of directions. • Talks about what was directly experienced.	**Talking AFTER Doing** Small groups of students (up to 5) participate in sequenced activities, then review the activity. Materials are those from previous levels, construction materials, a Polaroid camera and flannelboard figures.	**Math:** Students do ***Math Their Way*** activities, then discuss what they did first, next and last while the teacher illustrates the activity with rebus drawings and words. **Science:** Students conduct simplified experiments: what sinks, what floats, what is picked up by a magnet or how shadows change. **Reading:** Students use flannelboard figures to learn a story (like ***The Little Red Hen***), act out the story, dictate the story and read it.	Arrange construction projects with a sequence of steps. Repeat presentation of material, increasing expectations for participation each day. For example, use flannelboard pieces. Begin with describing the pieces, then tell a short story, then ask students to help you tell the same story, then give them props to act out the story, then provide pictures so they can dictate the story and take it home. Use repetition of materials and activity as the basis for increasing discussion participation. Review activities, talking about what was done first, second, next and last.	Doing and reviewing is a key procedure for developing the narrative level skills that are an important prerequisite to school success. Children from MSES homes receive opportunities to participate in this activity in their preschool years when parents ask, *What did you do today?* or *What happened at the party?* and then help to "scaffold" the child's response.	Given 1 hour a day of these kinds of activities, most children at GREEN/3 are ready to move to BLUE/4 Level instruction in 16 weeks. When planning at GREEN/3, develop objectives with these verbs: • Sequence • Order • Describe

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previous pair created. After duplicating the pattern successfully, the students dictate the pattern instructions to a helper who helps them to create a display of the pattern and the instructions.

Helpful resources. Children at GREEN/3 can really enjoy and benefit from the wonderful variety of enrichment flannelboard and/or hands-on activities. Examples are: ***The Flannelboard Storytelling Book by Judy Sierra*** (H.W. Wilson, 1997), ***Story Stretchers for the Primary Grades: Activities to Expand Children's Favorite Books by Shirley Raines*** (Gryphon House, 1992) and ***Instant Storymats: With Hands-on Activities that Build Essential Primary Math Skills*** by Mary Beth Spann (Scholastic, 1996). ECL Publications has a number of activities for this level, including ***Favorite Tales for Language Learners***, ***Classroom Language Builders*** and ***Language Learning Experiences.*** In addition, filmstrips and short videotapes offer the basis for quality discussions about what students saw.

Matching classroom LIL with student LIS. GREEN/3 activities are created by giving students experience with the same activity and/or language in two or more settings. The first setting is highly contextualized, and subsequent settings offer less and less context. An example is hearing a flannelboard story with more detail each day. Another example is making an art project, taking photos of the sequence of actions, discussing the actions, then writing out the actions. A third example is doing something (like measuring objects in the classroom) and talking about it, then writing about it.

Students have a GREEN/3 LIS when they:

- Can respond to the request to, *Tell me about what you just did to make this*, with three or more verbs.
- Can talk in small groups about things they just finished seeing or doing.
- Follow rules and topics of conversations in group.
- Answer questions posed in group about thing just done or seen.
- Enjoy sequencing pictures.
- Can relate two sequenced pictures as events in a single story.
- Still require assistance to relate a sequence of detailed events.

Language behaviors associated with a GREEN/3 LIS are:

- Connects sentences with *and* and *and then*.
- Relates events in a sequenced series of sentences.
- Uses sequencing words such as *first, next* and *last*.
- Begins using relative clauses.

Activities have a GREEN/3 LIL when:

- The learning style is reflection and discussion of real-world activities.
- Students discuss similar experiences at two or more levels of contextualization.
- Students work in small groups with visually scaffolded comprehension.

Suggested schedule. Kindergarten children from poverty homes can benefit from up to 16 weeks of activities at GREEN/3. For children learning English, this level may start at the end of their first CurricuLanguage year and continue through much of their second year. Learning disabled and other special needs students may require teaching at this level for one or more years.

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Concluding comments. Acting and reflecting is a teaching technique frequently employed by motivational speakers and other adult trainers. By doing something, then reflecting on the actions, participants are more closely connected to important concepts than participants who are just told about them.

GREEN/3 is the single level in the Transitional Stage

Children with an LIS of GREEN/3 are beginning to explore the uses of language removed from actual events. The transitional talking during and after events teaches sequencing while helping to build important narrative skills. Given opportunities to participate in activities, talk during the activities and talk after the activities, children will learn with speed and confidence. Within a few months, students can emerge from this state and begin the process of learning and using the literate, decontextualized language of traditional classrooms.

BLUE/4 is the level of Decontextualized Discussions

LSES students who work their way through the CurricuLanguage Levels to BLUE/4 will begin acting amazingly like the MSES students of more privileged neighborhoods. This is because they have arrived (finally) at the level expected by curricular decision-makers. Whether at a school, district, state or national level, most individuals thinking about school curriculum Pre-K through Grade 2 start out by visualizing what children can "learn," meaning "what children can be told by the teacher." In this vision, children learn by listening to teachers talk about new ideas and events. Children, therefore, are using language to learn about things they have not yet directly experienced. In order to benefit from hearing about things they may have never before experienced, children need to be at BLUE/4.

BLUE/4 is the level at which children move from the category of language inadequate for classroom learning to the category of language adequate for classroom learning, as discussed in Chapter 2. Using the terms of:

- Restricted versus elaborated code (Bernstein, 1964), children at BLUE/4 use elaborated code.
- Casual versus formal register (Payne, 1998), they use a formal register.
- BICS versus CALP (Cummins, 1979), they can demonstrate CALP.
- Learning to talk versus talking to learn (Westby, 1985), they can talk to learn.
- Perceptual-verbal talk versus verbal-verbal talk (Blank, 1982), they can participate in verbal-verbal talk.
- Dialogue skills versus narrative skills (Feagans, 1982), they have narrative skills.

Children at BLUE/4 are a joy for teachers. They listen when expected to listen, they talk when expected to talk, they learn what they are expected to learn. They can talk at length about people and events that are not immediately present. Just by hearing words, BLUE/4 Level children are able to create an internal representation of someone else's experience and to make comments on it. BLUE/4 Level children are also beginning to reflect on language as a thing that can be analyzed into words and sounds. These and similar skills are identified as "metalinguistic" because they require children to observe themselves as language users rather than to simply use language. Not surprisingly, the emergence of metalinguistic awareness has been highly correlated with reading success (Flood & Salus, 1982). This observation has led some to attempt to

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teach these skills directly. An alternative approach is to see metalinguistics as "magic markers" (Coles, 1999) or indicators of the richness of a child's previous experiences. Measurable skills like "phonemic awareness" can be viewed in the context of one of many new abilities enjoyed by BLUE/4 Level children. The best route to metalinguistic and similar abilities is to help students to increase their overall language level from earlier here-and-now levels to the impressive set of skills seen at the BLUE/4 Level.

Providing BLUE/4 experiences:

Curricular goals. The majority of curricular goals are at this level, including many specified for Pre-K classes. Here are some examples from a pre-kindergarten guide:

- Engage in conversation by sharing ideas with others.
- Dictate ideas and feelings.
- Discuss ways people can help each other.
- Identify basic economic wants of people.

These were written for kindergarten:

- Describe how water turns to steam.
- Tell how birds change their behavior and appearance according to the seasons.
- Describe similarities and characteristics of two-dimensional and three-dimensional figures.

Suggested materials. Most quality materials recommended for preschool and primary students are appropriate at this level: books, paper, pencil, art materials, pictures, photographs, etc. In addition, children at this level can benefit from using materials from previous levels. They will respond by bringing their interactions with the materials and with others up to their own level. Whereas a child at RED/1 might be content looking through a collection of buttons and noticing each button, a child at BLUE/4 might draw clothing appropriate for the buttons, compare buttons of wood, shell and plastic with other materials of the same composition, or stack them into an elaborate futuristic city.

Appropriate interactions. BLUE/4 children can handle large group instructions, whole class discussions and worksheet assignments. They are ready for teacher explanations that help them to understand how things work. They enjoy being read to and require few pictures to follow the meaning of the story.

Sample BLUE/4 activity. Use the school gymnasium or playground to create a model of the planets in the solar system. As a class, work out the actual sizes and distances and the converted sizes and distances for all the planets (such as 1 inch per 1,000 miles). Have the class break into smaller groups to create the planets. Help them to figure distances for placing the planets. Later, talk about where the sun would have to go in your model and together make a list of what students learned about the planets in the solar system.

Helpful resources. The Gateway to Educational Materials™, on the Internet, is a veritable cornucopia of BLUE/4 Level activities. Check it out at www.thegateway.org.

Matching classroom LIL with student LIS. Teaching the district curriculum as written will most likely put the classroom LIL at BLUE/4. These are activities which require group explanation, instruction and discussion. In addition, most government-issued books of teaching ideas are at this level.

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CurricuLanguage Model: BLUE/4 Level

THE THERE-AND-THEN STAGE OF INSTRUCTION AND DISCUSSION							
Level & Description	**Child Indicators**	**Child Academic Ability**	**Recommended Educational Interaction**	**Sample Interactions**	**Educational Suggestions**	**Rationale for Suggestions**	**Other Information**
BLUE/4 Decontextualized Discussion Students learn by listening to teacher explanations or information, then utilizing what they heard. • Language can support talk about things not directly experienced. • The student can participate in discussions about information read or heard.	The student: • Can complete worksheets independently. • Can actively participate in group discussions on a variety of topics. • Can tell a clear, coherent story from pictures. • May look like ideal student.	Preferred learning style is project-based discussions, but can tolerate interactions promoted by commercial curricula. The student: • Can meet expectations for grade level. • Comprehends grade-level material	**Talking WITHOUT Doing** Large groups (the whole class) of students can use language to learn about something brand new to them, and which they have never directly experienced. Includes instruction or discussion preceding worksheets.	**Math:** Group receives explanation of how to complete a worksheet, then completes it independently. **Science:** Group watches teacher conduct an experiment, then discusses. **Reading:** Group receives instruction on completing a page in reading workbook, then completes it independently.	Read good books aloud to groups, discuss variety of pictures available from government offices, offer a range of books and magazines as resources. Encourage independent goal setting and attainment. Model and reward discovery and curiosity. Request student ideas on ways to learn more about topics–and on topics to pursue. Have room resources available for students to freely utilize. If possible, enlist the services of a volunteer to assist with resources (such as dictionaries) when they are first introduced.	Offer rich and diverse opportunities for language use. Children from more privileged homes get these opportunities through discussions with adults, older siblings or linguistically advanced friends. Children from poverty homes may have no one outside of the school day who can offer this level of language experience.	It may take a year or more at BLUE/4 to help children from poverty homes move to VIOLET/5 skills. Some children may not get to VIOLET/5. When planning at BLUE/4, develop objectives with these verbs: • Explain • Discuss

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Students have a BLUE/4 LIS when they:

- Tell a story with sufficient detail so that the listener can understand what happened without asking clarifying questions.
- Talk with the teacher about things the teacher has just told them (verbal-verbal communication).
- Follow instructions independently.
- Bring ideas together to form new coherent thoughts.

Language behaviors associated with a BLUE/4 LIS are:

- Frequently uses complex sentences.
- Asks questions for clarification.
- Expresses ideas to others.
- Discusses differences of opinion.

Activities have a BLUE/4 LIL when:

- The learning style is discussion of teacher-provided information.
- The students ask and answer questions as a whole class.
- Students are asked to silently respond to worksheet instructions.

Suggested schedule. Some students will demonstrate BLUE/4 skills at the end of their first year of CurricuLanguage. The transition from BLUE/4 to VIOLET/5 may take a full year.

Concluding comments. If you are a teacher who started with RED/1 and YELLOW/2 children at the beginning of the school year and have facilitated their development to this level by May, you have done a wonderful thing! You have built confidence, assisted content learning and helped LSES children learn important school language. With luck, your colleague in the next grade will pick up your baton and carry it to the VIOLET/5 finish line! If this will not happen, at least you have helped your students by preparing them for success.

It seems to be the case that some children never attain the BLUE/4 Level. Without specific language-development opportunities, some children from poverty environments, other cultures or both remain at the GREEN/3 Level until, discouraged by the entire process, they drop out of school. For these students, a positive school experience remains an unfulfilled wish, their days evocative of this piece of writing reported by Cazden (1996):

Our teachers come to class,
And they talk and they talk,
Till their faces are like peaches.
We don't;
We just sit like cornstalks.

—Navajo child in New Mexico

VIOLET/5 is the level of Decontextualized Analysis

The child at the VIOLET/5 Level who can independently pursue knowledge while being supported by a skilled and sensitive teacher is, for many experts, the ideal student of modern education. "This is perhaps the teacher's most vital contribution: as a master providing guidance to an apprentice, who utilizes that guidance in the pursuit of his or her chosen goal, the value

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CurricuLanguage Model: VIOLET/5 Level

THE THERE-AND-THEN STAGE OF INSTRUCTION AND DISCUSSION							
Level & Description	**Child Indicators**	**Child Academic Ability**	**Recommended Educational Interaction**	**Sample Interactions**	**Educational Suggestions**	**Rationale for Suggestions**	**Other Information**
VIOLET/5 Decontextualized Analysis Students learn by developing and evaluating models. • Language used meets full range of educator expectations. • The student needs high level, challenging problems and analyses.	The student: • Can request clarification. • Can evaluate the completeness of material read or heard. • Can provide justification for reasoning.	Preferred learning style is independent project supported by able adults. The student: • Can surpass many requirements encountered in kindergarten and first grade. • Responds critically to material read or heard.	**Talking ABOUT Doing** Students use language to reason about the outcomes of hypothetical events. They can predict events and justify reasoning.	**Math:** Individuals plan projects and independently complete them. **Science:** Individuals follow steps of an experiment, record procedures and reflect on outcomes. **Reading:** Individuals pursue personal reading goals.	Arrange opportunities for students to plan and carry out projects of interest. Be available to support ideas and perceptions and to help problem-solve rough spots.	The child at the Violet/5 Level who is independently pursuing knowledge while being supported by a skilled and sensitive teacher is, for many experts, the ideal student of modern education.	When planning at VIOLET/5, develop objectives with these verbs: • Predict • Hypothesize • Evaluate

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of which is appreciated by both of them" (Wells, 1986, p. 120). And here we come full circle, because this could describe a RED/1 interaction as well. The difference is that the VIOLET/5 student has more abstract chosen goals, is better at expressing them, and can attain some parts of goals by thinking through a process instead of having to engage directly in it.

VIOLET/5 is also the level of detailed referential communication, which is the high level of communicative skill important to quality writing (McGinness, 1982). Students with quality expressive referential skills can:

- Locate and communicate critical attributes of a message or story.
- Modify descriptions in accordance with the information needs of the listener.
- Evaluate messages for clarity and comprehensiveness (Lloyd & Beveridge, 1981).

Quality listeners can request information they need and check their own comprehension (Ninio & Snow, 1996).

Providing VIOLET/5 experiences:

Curricular goals. A child capable of managing interactions at this level has the LIS to meet even the most imposing of goals like these taken from kindergarten curricula:

- Listen for the purpose of abstracting central or important ideas.
- Listen for the purpose of making critical judgments.
- Explore concepts of *old/new* and apply to analysis of local man-made structures.
- Identify and describe variables that may affect the behavior of a system.
- Give directions with clarity and accuracy by explaining how to get somewhere or how to do something as determined by the teacher.

Suggested materials. Students at this level benefit from all types of books as well as real-world materials for projects. This is the only level at which students can successfully play barrier games, which provide the opportunity to organize and understand messages without the help of visual cues (Glucksberg & Kraus, 1967). To create barrier games, use duplicate sets of materials and some form of desktop barrier.

Appropriate interactions. Set up opportunities for project selection. Encourage students to consider alternatives carefully, and be available to help students think through problems and solutions. The ideal activities engage students in actively constructing meaning: planning a garden, inventorying classroom books, graphing hand measurements and so forth. An exciting source of ideas for VIOLET/5 projects are the "A" level projects described in Layered Curriculum (Nunley, 2001).

Sample VIOLET/5 activity. Introduce the study area of animals and habitats. Ask for ideas on factors that are important. Suggest projects: building a model habitat, drawing a sample habitat with animals, creating a chart comparing animals across habitats. Ask for other project ideas. Help students to select or modify a project and to get started. Talk with students individually about projects.

Helpful resources. Invite professionals from the community to assist with projects and to suggest resources. Projects and activities for gifted children are a good source of suggestions.

Matching classroom LIL with student LIS. VIOLET/5 students can handle highly decontextualized language. They can read for meaning and completeness and write complete coherent accounts.

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Students have a VIOLET/5 LIS when they:

- Can evaluate verbal material for clarity.
- Can request additional information when necessary.
- Talk about objects and events that are only hypothetical possibilities.
- Use language to consider alternative courses of action and to evaluate their consequences before actually undertaking the activity under consideration.
- Can share the reasoning behind a statement or position.

Language behaviors associated with a VIOLET/5 LIS are:

- Provides sufficient information so the listener can follow directions.
- Uses compound verb tenses.
- Detects incomplete information or inconsistencies in the information.
- Discusses what might happen or could happen.

Activities have a VIOLET/5 LIL when:

- The learning style is evaluation of verbally presented material.
- Student responses need to be clear and detailed.

Suggested schedule. Children from MSES homes begin demonstrating VIOLET/5 skills by second grade. Children from LSES homes may never attain this level, even as adults.

Concluding comments. A student demonstrating VIOLET/5 Level skills is prepared to succeed at all levels of education. Skill with decontextualized language is at the level required for maintaining high academic performance through high school graduation.

BLUE/4 and VIOLET/5 are at the There-and-Then Stage of Instruction and Discussion

This is the stage identified with success in school and ability to read and write. Children at this stage, by demonstrating decontextualized language skills, begin to use language in the same way that grown-ups do. The speaker or writer begins to take the listener's information needs into account and the reading comprehension process becomes an active one in which the child blends story information with personal knowledge.

❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖

CurricuLanguage Use

The steps for using a CurricuLanguage approach are:

- To identify the current student LIS.
- To modify the curriculum LIL to match the current level.
- To document results.

Identifying the current LIS and evaluating results use the same procedures

The methods available for identifying student LIS and documenting results of a Curricu-

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CurricuLanguage Levels of Common Language Goals

LANGUAGE GOALS	RED/1	YELLOW/2	GREEN/3	BLUE/4	VIOLET/5
Speaks in sentences	Uses mostly gestures and single words.	Talks in short (3- or 4-word) and incomplete sentences.	Uses longer (5- or 6-word) sentences with conjunctions.	Adds prepositional phrases, adverbs and adjectives. Uses sentences of 6 to 8 words.	Speaks in complex sentences of 9+ words with relative clauses and conditional statements.
Tells personal experience or creative story	Mainly names objects.	Describes pictures or event but does not connect in a sequence.	Tells part of story or event. Connects events with *and* and *then*.	Tells coherent story or event with all critical elements and clear sequence indicated.	Elaborates story with location, motivation, details.
Uses vocabulary	Uses very few words.	Uses indefinite words like *stuff* and pronouns without referent (*it, they,* etc.).	Uses and understands basic concept vocabulary (*row, next to, around*) and a variety of nouns and verbs.	Spontaneously uses new vocabulary. Asks about unfamiliar words or concepts.	Applies rich and flexible vocabulary to clearly communicate idea to listener or reader.
Follows directions	Needs individual instruction with demonstration.	Follows single oral direction with demonstration.	Follows sequence of oral directions when written and reviewed.	Reads or listens, then independently follows directions.	Reads or listens, then requests clarification if unclear.
Participates in discussions	Responds verbally only if "dragged" out by instructor.	Answers if called on, but response incorrect, incomplete or off-topic.	Volunteers, but response not on-topic or correct. May talk "too much" about extraneous issues.	Volunteers with clear complete answers. Can't always explain reasoning.	Responds to teacher question and other student comments. Gives support for own ideas.
Answers questions	*What's this?* *What did you see?*	*What is happening?* *How do we use this?* *How are these different?*	*What will happen next?* *What could he/she say/do?* *How do we . . . ?* *How are these the same?*	*What else could happen?* *What made it happen?* *When did he . . . ?*	*Why do you think that would happen?* *Why is ___ made of that?* *How can we tell?* *Why did you . . . ?*
Verbalizes with peers	Follows the lead of others without talking.	Makes brief verbal requests and lists words together.	Verbally guides activity with peer and plans together.	Negotiates actions with peers and develops strategies together.	Discusses ideas and concepts with peers and can coauthor a report or story.

Language approach include observation, anecdotal records, language samples and direct testing.

Observation and anecdotal records offer the simplest approach. After reading through the descriptions of each of the five levels, arrange student names from lowest to highest LIS. To the right of the names, write observed behaviors which indicate particular levels of LIS. Group students within a particular LIS by drawing a box around their names and the descriptions of behaviors. To assist in observation, refer to CurricuLanguage Levels of Common Language Goals on page 85.

Language samples provide clear documentation of student expressive skill level. Transcribing student stories offers an inexpensive and efficient way to demonstrate student LIS. Show each student a set of sequenced photos or pictures (no more than six) and ask the student to look at the pictures and tell you the "very best story" he/she can. Write the story exactly as the student tells it. Use the behaviors and story examples in the table below to help group students by demonstrated LIS. The examples were obtained by asking kindergarten children to tell a story using "Sequence Story #7" from ***Pictures Please: An Articulation Supplement.*** This set of reproducible illustrations is available from Psychological Corporation. The pictures were selected because:

- They were reproducible. One copy could be made and sent to every primary grade teacher in the district.
- The story illustrated by the pictures was subtle enough to require "story grammar" skills in order to discover it.

Matching Child Story and LIS

LIS	Behavior	Story Example
RED/1	Names objects and actions.	*Go home. Pig go. Goat. Pig out.*
YELLOW/2	Describes objects and actions in sentences, picture by picture, but does not cohere into a story.	*That's the girl. That's the pig. That's the billy goat. The girl's going over the fence. The girl's talking to the goat. The girl's walking to the gate.*
GREEN/3	Attempts to relate a story based on the pictures. May lack detail and coherence.	*The girl is going—the pig and the goat. The girl climbed over the fence. She came and the gate and she couldn't . . . she couldn't, um, find the . . . she couldn't take the goat and the pig. Then she took the goat and the pig. Then she took the goat and they finally fit.*
BLUE/4	Provides a complete story that includes major characters, initiating events, responses and resolution.	*The little girl had a pig and a goat and then she couldn't find the gate! And then she climbed over the fence and then she said, "Come on, let's get over." Then the little goat answered, "No," so she find the gate and she opened the gate.*
VIOLET/5	Tells a complete story with beginning and ending. Accurately conveys all the details and nuances of the story.	*The little girl was walking with the pig and the goat. She stopped when they got to a fence. She climbed over and said, "Here, goat, you climb over too." The goat didn't climb, so the girl came back. "Well, you lazy goat. What can we do now?" They just walked along until there was a gate. Then they walked through. The end.*

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Use key skills to divide students into groups. Key skills provide quick glimpses into child levels of LIS. While not completely accurate, they can offer a good indication of what a student skill level might be. During an art or construction activity, invite children to describe their activity. Students who can use three verbs without prompting are at GREEN/3 or above. An example is: *I cut out this paper and glued it here and then colored it.* For older students, use a set of one-inch blocks to create a three-color pattern like red-white-blue-red-white. Invite a student to place the next block. After the student does so correctly, ask for the reasoning behind the action. Students who can justify their action are at BLUE/4 or above. An example is: *There's a red, then a white, then a blue. Then it starts again with red and white, so the next one needs to be blue.*

Use *Primary Success* to directly document student LIS. *Primary Success* is a group-administered, criterion-referenced test designed specifically to document student LIS. It is in the final stages of development and should be available by Fall 2001.

Use information on student LIS to guide curricular and classroom modifications

The CurricuLanguage Model can be used as a guide to revising the curriculum as a district project. A first step in revising the curriculum is to identify the current LIL of each objective. If the LIL is at GREEN/3 or higher, the second step is to write subcomponents of the objective at RED/1 and YELLOW/2. The following example is the result of expanding a single objective into component parts:

OBJECTIVE: Uses pictures to make predictions about story content (BLUE/4).

Criterion: Teacher says, "Here's a story and here's a picture of something that happens in the story. Look at the picture at the top of the page, and tell me what you think this story is about."

Subcomponent A: Talks about individual pictures (YELLOW/2).

A.1. Attends in a one-to-one setting while an adult or older student shares an age-appropriate book and models description of pictures (RED/1).

A.2. Selects picture from collection of magazine and/or calendar pictures for an adult or older student to describe. Watches and listens (RED/1).

A.3. Selects picture from collection of magazine and/or calendar pictures for an adult or older student to describe. Participates by pointing out parts to describe (RED/1).

A.4. Selects picture from collection of magazine and/or calendar pictures for an adult or older student to describe. Volunteers comments during the description (YELLOW/2).

A.5. Selects picture from collection of magazine and/or calendar pictures. Dictates description for adult or older student to transcribe (YELLOW/2).

A.6. Selects picture from collection of magazine and/or calendar pictures, draws own picture or takes instant photographs. Dictates description for adult or older student to transcribe (YELLOW/2).

A.7. Creates daily journal by selecting or creating an illustration, then dictating description for an adult or older student to transcribe (YELLOW/2).

Subcomponent B: Talks about picture sequences (GREEN/3)

B.1. Participates in a three-step, motor-based activity (modeling clay, making a paper hat, etc.)

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in a one-to-one setting while an adult or older student describes actions (RED/1).

B.2. Participates in a three-step, motor-based activity (modeling clay, making a paper hat, etc.) in a one-to-one setting while an adult or older student takes three instant photos. Immediately afterward, helps the adult arrange the instant photos in order. Listens while the adult describes the actions. May choose to participate in description or just listen (RED/1).

B.3. Arranges photographs from previous activity and describes sequence of actions with the help (scaffolding) of adult or older student (YELLOW/2).

B.4. Arranges photographs from previous activity and independently describes sequence of actions using at least three different verbs (GREEN/3).

B.5. Arranges photographs from classmate's activity and describes sequence of actions using at least three different verbs (GREEN/3).

B.6. Describes actions in commercially available photo sequences (GREEN/3).

B.7. Describes actions in commercially available sequenced drawings (GREEN/3).

B.8. Draws three-panel sequences of real or imagined events for journal. Dictates events for transcription (GREEN/3).

B.9. Arranges three or four previously unseen illustrations and describes events using at least three different verbs (GREEN/3).

Subcomponent C: Talks about what could happen next (GREEN/3)

C.1. Listens in small group (3 to 5) to description of sequenced pictures and discussion of "What could happen next?" (GREEN/3).

C.2. Volunteers suggestions for "What could happen next?" when discussing picture sequences in small group (GREEN/3).

C.3. In small group, chooses a picture from teacher options and makes up a story about it (GREEN/3).

C.4. In large group (whole class), draws picture to illustrate personal view of the next event in a sequence (GREEN/3).

Pairing student LIS with suggestions for appropriate interactions at each level can also lead to effective lesson modification.

Here's an example:

> The educational consultant observed a science lesson in a second grade class of children primarily from poverty homes. The teacher, having spent the entire weekend preparing the science centers, was close to tears. The students were not responding in the enthusiastic way she had imagined when putting the centers together. One center had a balance scale, some objects to weigh and a worksheet. The students were to select two objects, put one on each side of the scale, then note on the accompanying worksheet which side went down. A second center had foods to sort into healthy and unhealthy categories. A third center honored Archimedes by replicating the famous bathtub scene. Students were to mark the level of water in a paper bowl, put an object into the water, then mark the new water level. At a fourth center, students were to move clock hands to match the time of day one would engage in various pictured activities. Groups of five students were placed at each center. They were to move smoothly to the next center upon hearing the signal to do so.
>
> Experienced educators are probably already shaking their heads, but this teacher

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was new, inexperienced, energetic and—for the moment—extremely discouraged. Despite complete written instructions at each center, students had participated by standing aimlessly, exploring materials in socially desirable ways (holding, inspecting), then exploring them in less desirable ways (hiding, throwing). One group, when corrected by the teacher, blamed each other for the correction and started pushing. The food-sorters had engaged in the task, but were sorting the foods by color rather than by nutritional properties. At the signal to move on, the students all froze and looked at the teacher.

This activity could benefit from a complete makeover, but the heart of the problem is the mismatch between the Level 2 LIS of the students and the classroom Level 4 LIL. At Level 2 LIS, students need to pair language and actions. They need to see and hear what is expected of them at the same time. They also require opportunities to learn that are based on direct sensory experiences. Although the teacher had thought she was providing sensory experiences, three activities were wrapped in a series of instructions that required much higher language skills to process. (The exception, sorting foods, called for use of the high-level concept "nutritious.")

The educational consultant congratulated the teacher for going toward a hands-on approach to science and indicated that direct experience with objects was exactly what her students needed. These experiences needed to be modified so that the instructions and the activity became more concrete. The consultant then made the following suggestions:

- Pick only one activity. Pick the activity requiring the least amount of abstract previous learning (and the most use of direct sensory experience) to perform the task or to benefit from it. The clock activity, for example, required knowing how to tell time. The balance scale activity, by contrast, offered the sensory experience of object weight in hands and the experience of seeing the balance scale move.
- Plan to set up four or five centers based on this one activity. Modify the materials at each center so that students have a slightly different experience each time.
- Plan to give each student a copy of the written instructions plus a picture or other symbol for each instruction (see sample instructions). Underline the action words in the instructions.
- Plan to teach the center use across four days:

  Day 1: Give students the instruction sheet. Put a transparency of the instructions on an overhead. Invite older students from another class to model carrying out each instruction, using the center materials, as it is read (and pointed out on the instruction sheet transparency). Then invite selected students to demonstrate the instructions as they are read, while the rest of the class watches (see sample instructions).

  Day 2: Pass out the instruction sheets, put the transparency on the overhead and ask about the previous day. Invite selected students to carry out the instructions as they are read. Invite a student to read the instructions (with help).

  Day 3: Give students three copies of the worksheet, consisting of a large picture of the balance scale. Ask one student to read and one student to perform the activity. Then put a transparency of the worksheet on the overhead. Ask students to draw or write the name of the first object on the side of the scale

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Instructions for Using the Balance Scale

1. Pick up one (1) object.

2. Put the object on one (1) side of the scale.

3. Pick up another object.

4. Put the object on the other side of the scale.

5. WATCH

6. THINK

7. Which side went down?

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used. Ask them to do the same thing for the second object. Show them how to draw an arrow to indicate which side went down.

Day 4: Set up four or five centers with balance scales and objects. Give half the class a sorting, puzzle or other "seat" assignment, while the other half goes to the centers in pairs or threes (at most).

Day 5: If desired, use this day to discuss what was done and write a report together, as a class.

The consultant was able to make these recommendations because she understood the learning needs and abilities of children at Level 3 LIS (and also knew where to get five balance scales). The teacher, in contrast, planned the original lesson because she was unaware of these learning requirements. When the lesson was modified in accordance with the consultant's suggestions, both the children and the teacher enjoyed the outcome.

By successfully completing this lesson, children became more sophisticated in center use and better prepared to participate in additional center experiences. A teacher choosing to do so could continue to present modified center experiences which increase slightly in difficulty. Eventually, children could participate in the four center experiences originally planned by the teacher.

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CurricuLanguage Projects

In the late 1980s, an early version of the CurricuLanguage Model was the basis of a kindergarten language development kit called K-TALK (Kindergarten-Teacher Administered Language Kit) which provided specific teacher interactions for kindergarten children at seven levels of language ability (Weiner, Lyons & Creighton, 1989).

K-TALK activities taught science, math and social studies goals along with language

In a boxed kit, K-TALK provided the materials and instructions for one lesson per day, four or five days a week. Teachers began with a test to determine student LIS, then started at one of seven levels of LIL that matched student language. The levels were coded to the seven colors of the rainbow: Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo and Violet, with Red being the lowest level. Although LIL was held constant over a period of weeks, the content taught varied from day to day. Of greatest interest to teachers were activities for the lowest four levels (Red to Green), because Blue was designated the level that commercial curriculum developers expect. Students at Blue or above, therefore, could do well in the kindergarten classroom. Students at Green or below, however, required extra help to raise their language levels. An overview of activities for K-TALK is on page 92.

It's important to note that the teaching ideas presented were not new. They had already been found to be effective and had been recommended by a number of educational researchers. The CurricuLanguage Model did not invent the activities; instead, it placed known effective activities

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Sample K-TALK Activities Organized by Language Level and Content

Development Levels and Behaviors	Overview and References	Math Activity	Social Studies Activity	Science Activity
RED/1 Silent or single-word responses. Doesn't follow instructions and doesn't work independently. Works well one-to-one.	Provide materials that invite individual exploration. Verbalize child's perceptions (Bloom & Lahey, 1978; Carew, 1980; Muma, 1978; Wells, 1986).	Discuss child perceptions while exploring: geometric shapes, small sorting objects, blocks, wallpaper samples and paper clips.	Discuss child perceptions while exploring: buttons, fabric pieces, vehicle pictures, clothing pictures and school pictures.	Discuss child perceptions while exploring: dry beans, food pictures, seashells and clay.
ORANGE/2 Holds conversations with more advanced language user. Appears lost in group discussions. Works well one-to-one.	Provide materials and activities that facilitate dialogue with a more advanced language user (Blank, 1983; Hart, 1982; Tough, 1985; Wells, 1986).	Discuss child perceptions while sorting geometric shapes or discovering attributes.	Discuss child perceptions while sorting vinyl cling folders or discovering attributes.	Discuss child perceptions while sorting wooden objects or reviewing concept pairs.
YELLOW/3 Holds conversations with peers. May talk too much in groups and/or make "off-topic" comments.	Provide materials and activities that facilitate dialogue with same-level language user (Genishi & Dyson, 1984; Katz, Raths & Torres, 1987).	Provide peer math center.	Provide peer bookworm, art, drama, communication and construction centers.	Provide peer nature and textile centers.
GREEN/4 Can talk about sequences of activities that have been directly experienced.	Plan group experience, then review (Westby, 1985) or build routines (Snow, Dubber & Blauw, 1983) through repeat use of materials.	Use terms *first, second, third* and *last* when sequencing photos.	Sequence photos of daily activities. Share nursery rhymes and flannelboard stories. Dramatize stories.	Sequence photos on science topics. Predict next action following sequence of photos. Sequence nature drawings.
BLUE/5 Can talk about events that have not been directly experienced.	Celebrate new ability to discuss events remote in time and space (Bloom & Lahey, 1978).	Read counting story of **Four Silly Brothers**. Develop personal books.	Read variety of folk tales. Develop personal books.	Discuss science photos and read related stories. Develop personal books.
INDIGO/6 Can speak and write in organized, coherent messages	Refine referential communication skills (Allen & Brown, 1976).	Develop and use barrier games based on number and shape.	Develop and use barrier games based on maps, stamps or similar objects.	Develop and use barrier games based on clouds, habitats and other pictures.
VIOLET/7 Can create and use internal verbal models.	Support continued cognitive-linguistic development through conversations about projects (Wells, 1986).	Offer measuring and charting projects.	Offer projects on other cultures, maps, families and cities.	Offer science projects.

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in a sequence that was practical for kindergarten teachers.

K-TALK results showed that students developed language skills at an accelerated rate. Between 1989 and 1991, K-TALK was used in kindergarten classrooms in four Phoenix-area districts. A comparison of resulting language scores of students in K-TALK classrooms with those in non-K-TALK classrooms showed measurable differences in three of the four districts. While students with and without K-TALK started out at the same levels of LIS, students using K-TALK had increased by three to four LIS levels by the end of the year. Given the research base and the structure of the materials, this was an expected result. There were, however, additional outcomes that had not been anticipated.

Teacher comments indicated that K-TALK students learned content at an accelerated rate. An unanticipated outcome was the ease and speed with which poverty kindergarten children acquired content material. Teachers of young children from poverty homes, accustomed to constant struggles with concepts and helping children to understand, were amazed at the rapidity with which children learned when the material was presented at the needed language level. Comments like, *eager learning, comfortable projects* and *rapid comprehension*, typified teacher reports. It seemed that, when children were provided with the needed LIL, the resulting learning was natural to the children.

Classroom observation showed children who were eager learners who felt good about themselves and about learning. A third outcome was the degree of child enthusiasm for the activities. Children looked forward to use of the materials and asked to do the activities again. In one outstanding half-day class, for example, the teacher began by showing students the schedule and discussing the learning plans. Each day, K-TALK was scheduled after the children returned from recess. After a few weeks, the mention of K-TALK in the schedule was greeted with smiles. In a few more weeks, the smiles became little murmurs of delight, which became louder until, toward the end of the year, children responded with a chorus of spontaneous cheers and applause when K-TALK was announced. One day in May, as the teacher was reviewing the schedule, she told the students that there would be no K-TALK. The students needed to use the time to practice the Mother's Day show. Groans and sad faces greeted this news. In the dismal silence, one voice piped up, *Teacher, could we do K-TALK if we stay in from recess?*

The educational consultant, although charmed by the story, was most impressed with the high quality of language demonstrated by the questioning child. In just one year of a half-day program, this child had grown from silent wariness to confidence in expressing thoughts and ideas verbally.

Widespread use of K-TALK showed varying results. One of the four Phoenix-area districts reported there was no difference between the results with the K-TALK classroom and non-K-TALK classrooms. During the years that K-TALK was commercially available, varying results were also reported. Some programs documented high levels of child achievement and continue to use the kits today. Success with use of the kit, however, was highly dependent on administrative support and teacher willingness to use the recommended methods. In the climate of the 1980s, this was less often the case than it is today. In the early 1990s, K-TALK went out of print.

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K-READ presented kindergarten reading activities appropriate to development

One administrator, noting the student ease of learning, asked if reading might be taught using the same model. To develop a CurricuLanguage reading strategy, reading objectives and recommended teaching methods were located, rated by activity LIL, and arranged in the same LIS sequence as the K-TALK activities. Not surprisingly, few objectives were located below the

Reading and Writing Objectives for K-READ

LIS	Reading Objectives	Writing Objectives
RED/1	• Recognizes 5 to 10 highly contextualized words (cereal boxes, candy wrappers, T-shirts, etc.). • Recognizes own name and those of friends. • Follows along as teacher points out activities on the class schedule (with rebus). • Experiences a model (teacher or other adult) who demonstrates reading for information/pleasure on an ongoing basis. • "Reads" and follows instructions for letter center use (in rebus).	• Draws and dictates for transcription (even one word or gesture) a personal journal entry daily. • Traces over dictated/written words in personal journal. • Shows interest in using pens, pencils, crayons with a variety of papers and in different ways. • Completes letter center use report form (with help) to take home and describe to parents. • Experiences a model of writing to remember things and writing to share ideas with a reader.
YELLOW/2	• Sight reads up to 100 personally selected key words, including highly contextualized words. • Develops word recognition strategies by solving 5 browsing book word puzzles per week. • "Reads" favorite familiar book. • Recognizes some frequently occurring words in books.	• Writes up to 100 personally selected key words. • Traces over dictated/written words in personal journal. • Writes name.
GREEN/3	• Locates "letter of the week" in a variety of print material. • Identifies all alphabet letters by name. • Develops story grammar strategies by solving 5 browsing book story puzzles per week. • Independently works out simple stories by using pictures as clues. • Site reads 300-word core vocabulary.	• Creates "letter of the week" in a variety of media such as clay, on typewriter, yarn, potato stamp and so forth. • Independently completes letter center use report. • Creates personalized charts of words beginning with the letter of the week. • Writes some entries in personal journal and illustrates and dictates others.
BLUE/4	• Independently completes commercial reading curriculum worksheet assignments. • Selects and reads own books. • Shows interest in child magazines, nature books, etc., as sources of information.	• Illustrates and writes simple stories. • Uses simple dictionary for spelling assistance. • Uses writing to attain personal goals, such as invitations, words to songs, etc.

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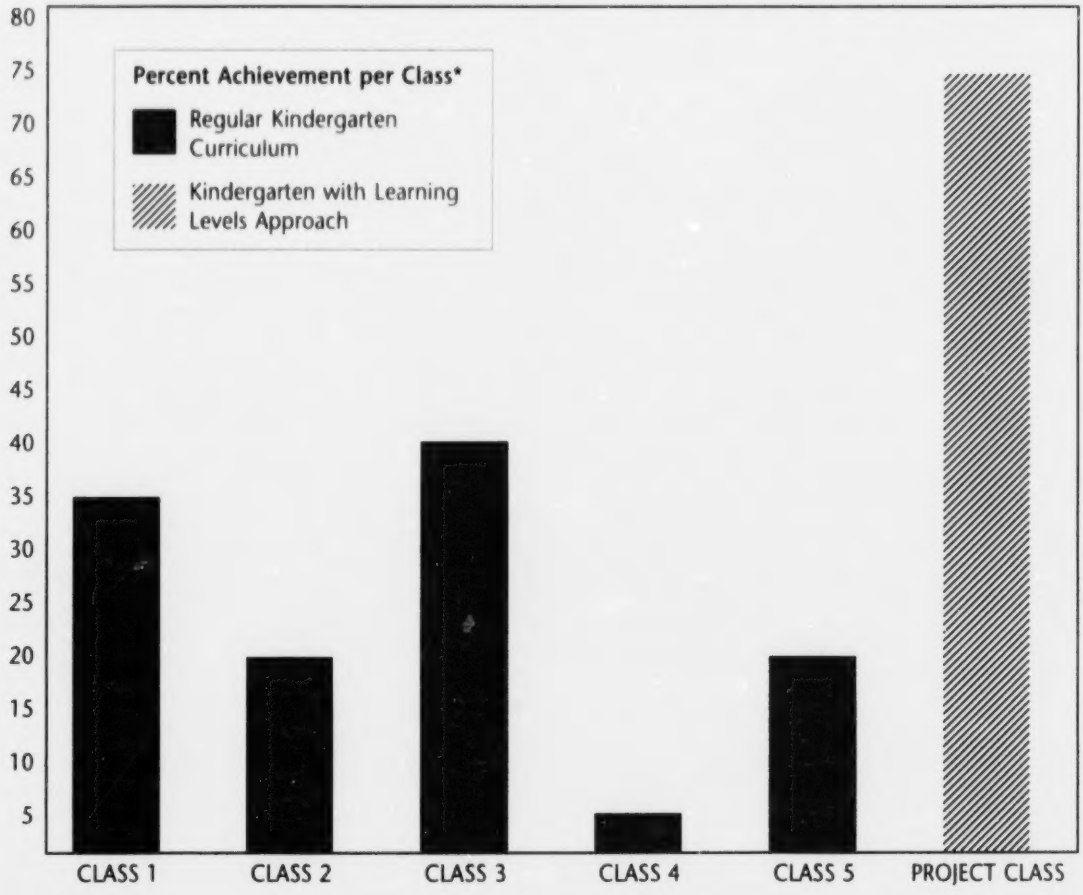
BLUE/4 Level. New objectives were written to fill in the lower LILs. At the lowest level of LIL, much use was made of discovery learning methods and opportunities to allow child independent problem solving. The attention and comprehension demands on children slowly increased until, toward the end of the year, children were completing worksheets from a commercial kindergarten reading curriculum.

An outline of activities in K-READ is on page 94. The variety and number of activities required extensive outside time. Although consultants assisted as much as possible, the teacher consumed many evenings and weekends preparing for the following week. At the beginning levels, these activities required a high level of child/adult interaction. For most of the reading time, a trained classroom assistant helped with the activities. This effectively reduced the child:adult ratio to 10 to 1, which is an important consideration.

Results from the first year of K-READ in one class showed student learning beyond expectations. The results of administration of the Scott-Foresman Test of Reading Readiness are given in the chart below. In the class using K-READ, 75% of the children tested at or above

Results on the Scott-Foresman Test of Reading Readiness
Comparing Regular Kindergarten Curriculum and Learning Levels Approach



Note: *Achieving is defined as obtained scores at or above the learning expectation for Anglo middle-class students.

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performance expectations for Anglo middle-class children. This contrasted with 40%, 35%, 20%, 20% and 5% in the other five classes.

Based on the pilot results, funding was obtained to expand the program to six classrooms. To provide the necessary additional adult assistance, parents were hired and trained to interact with the children using the K-READ activities. Results on the Metropolitan Test of Reading Readiness given at the end of the year showed a varying degrees of success. Teachers indicated that the program required too much time and effort and that they were not comfortable allowing children to function outside of the group setting. The conclusions after two years of the K-READ project were:

- It is possible *in principle* to raise reading abilities (as measured by standardized test scores) of LSES children to the level of MSES children in one year.
- Doing so using the K-READ approach requires a level of resources not generally available: a 10:1 child-to-adult ratio, and assistance with preparation of the materials.
- Success with K-READ is highly dependent on teacher skill and comfort with supporting and facilitating individual learning pursuits.

In essence, LSES children can catch up to MSES children in one year in reading if the adult:child ratio is kept down, children are offered opportunities to discover how reading works, and teachers offer opportunities for individual pursuits and interaction.

The CurricuLanguage Model was adopted for a Creighton School District project

During pilot studies of K-TALK, a bilingual director noted the ease and rapidity with which Spanish-speaking children in K-TALK classrooms learned English. She shared her observations with K-TALK authors and with district personnel. When one of those district employees became the bilingual director for Creighton School District in Phoenix, she took the concept of CurricuLanguage with her. With the support of the author, she received federal funding to utilize this model in a dual language program. Dual language programs provided content-based instruction in English and Spanish on alternate days. Classes were composed of a mix of Spanish-speaking and English-speaking students. The goals were fluency in both languages for all students as well as attainment of content objectives. The funding covered teacher training, materials and teacher classroom support through a network of consultants and teachers on assignment.

Fortuitously, Creighton had already embarked on a district-wide commitment to Kovalik's Integrated Thematic Instruction (ITI), an approach which emphasizes classroom affective quality and the importance of "being there" experiences for students (Kovalik, 1993). As a result, the Creighton teachers had a foundation in a student-centered, discovery-based philosophy. While results from this project will not be available until next year, there is some preliminary information:

- Children in the dual language classrooms are increasing LIS by two to three levels while simultaneously learning a second language.
- Academic performance of children in the dual language classrooms exceeds that of children in non-project classrooms.

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- Kovalik's ITI and the CurricuLanguage Model appear to provide complementary information in which the foundational philosophy of ITI is implemented through the detail of the CurricuLanguage Model.

The educational consultant watched quietly while the teacher set up the second grade classroom to play barrier games. Although barrier games work best with BLUE/4 and VIOLET/5 students, this teacher was prepared to use them with her YELLOW/2 and GREEN/3 class. She divided students into pairs, put a desk-top barrier between each pair, and gave each student a set of identical picture cards. *Find a card,* she said, *and describe it to your partner so your partner can find the same card. Do not show your partner your card. Do not let your partner see your card. Use your words to tell your partner about your card.* While the teacher was helping each pair of students to individually begin playing the game, the educational consultant observed this interaction:

Student 1: *It got this stuff down in the corner.*
Student 2: *Corner? What corner?*
Student 1: *It down there and it kinda pink.*
Student 2: *What? What is it?*
Student 1: *It's got these green parts on the inside.*
Student 2: *I can't do this!*
Student 1: *You're not listening very good.*
Student 2: *I'm listening as good as you're talking!*

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CHAPTER 5

Why talk about this now?

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Accountability-the-Good

In the current climate of reform, schools are actively looking for ways to change

CurricuLanguage supports existing reform models

Instruction of students from poverty homes requires a shift to the positive for families, teachers and children

Teaching for the 21st century requires a constructivist perspective

Accountability-the-Rotten

Accountability-the-Rotten reduces important teacher autonomy

Accountability-the-Rotten favors an educational model over a developmental model

Developmental learning comes first

Educational learning is dependent on the skills acquired through developmental learning

Accountability-the-Rotten does not recognize the developmental learner

Accountability-the-Rotten favors behaviorism over constructivism

Behaviorism assumes the student is a passive recipient of information

Constructivism supports an active student role

Accountability-the-Rotten risks freezing young LSES children into behaviorist educational models while MSES children explore constructivist developmental opportunities

Where Do I Start?

Middle class (MSES) children show up at school with learning skills built from thousands of confidence-building conversations. In the five years from birth to kindergarten, these MSES children start out with a language system that is completely dependent on the surrounding context and develop one in which they carry that context around in their heads. This allows them to understand decontextualized language by pulling up the appropriate stored context from previous positive language experiences. The schedule for climbing this decontextualized ladder gets MSES children to kindergarten with the set of language skills expected by traditional kindergarten curricula.

Children from poverty homes (LSES) are climbing the decontextualized ladder too; they just don't get as far as fast. Fewer conversations of any kind, more confidence-eroding comments, and possibly fewer experiences to talk about put LSES children in kindergarten still needing context-based conversations in order to learn at maximum capability.

Yet most states promote teaching the same curricular goals in the same ways to both groups. Not surprisingly, the results are different. The MSES children learn the material and score well on standardized tests. The LSES children struggle with the materials and do not score well on standardized tests. It appears that LSES children have difficulty learning. They do not. They have difficulty benefiting from the decontextualized "instruction and discussion" teaching method that is used. Change the method and you can change the learning. Even better, you can also change the language level so LSES children can catch up to MSES children.

This is not a complicated message. It is not a new one either. If this information were a human, it would have a driver's license by now. Many of the articles cited are from the 1980s and far too many of the referenced books are out of print. The first question that arises, *Why haven't I heard about this before?* was addressed in Chapter 2. That still leaves a question, *Why talk about this now?*

There are two reasons: accountability and accountability. More specifically, Accountability-the-Good and its evil twin Accountability-the-Rotten. Increased policymaker interest in documenting the impact of educational efforts has led to the expanded practice of using educational results reported in a standard, state-mandated manner to make decisions about students and schools. The most frequently reported data are scores on standardized tests that have been developed by national testing companies. The recent expansion of the use of testing scores for accountability purposes has led to "increased real or perceived stakes of results for teachers and educational administrators" (Linn, 2000, p. 7). In essence, the behaviors of people making important decisions about the education of young children are being strongly influenced by expectations of how those behaviors will affect standardized test score performance.

This influence is felt most strongly in schools for the poorest 25% of the nation's children. In general, MSES students score well on standardized assessments and LSES students do not. While those schools already meeting or exceeding state requirements are left alone, the full brunt of accountability influences are felt by those schools not yet performing up to expected standards

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as assessed by national tests. As a result, most schools for MSES students are ignored while the schools for LSES students are pressured to make changes in order to do better. Depending on the changes that the schools for LSES children decide to make, the outcome for LSES children can be very good or very, very bad.

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Accountability-the-Good

Accountability, as an engine of educational reform, can help to create a climate for change. A recently released report (U.S. Department of Education, 1999), for example, identified high-poverty urban elementary schools with high test scores. These high-poverty, high-performance schools had the following characteristics in common:

- School leadership focused on attainable first goals. Success with first goals allowed subsequent definition of more ambitious ones.
- Educators created environments which fostered student responsibility for appropriate behavior.
- Educators were given instructional leadership roles.
- School leaders focused on providing adequate resources (materials, equipment and training) to their teachers.
- Teachers built partnerships with parents.
- School instruction was aligned to state standards.
- Additional time for instruction was created.

Students in high-poverty urban schools can attain educational goals when conditions are organized to help them do so.

In the current climate of reform, schools are actively looking for ways to change

Recognition of quality performance and identification of practices leading to high performance in high-poverty schools allows others to consider setting and meeting similar goals. It fosters a sense of hope that all children can, in fact, succeed. The sense is that practices, once identified, can be adopted more generally so that even more children can succeed. There is a "can do" attitude and the feeling that individuals, working together on identified goals, can overcome obstacles and solve problems.

The learning needs of children from poverty homes are better understood now than they were 20 years ago. In a recent publication, Payne (1998) identified language differences as a key reason for school failure of disadvantaged students. In this climate, innovative approaches like CurricuLanguage are welcome. Individuals are poised to make changes in order to improve outcomes. In addition, resources are available to implement classroom modifications. School-based administrators are committed to working with teachers; districts are committed to working with schools. There is a willingness and openness to review new information that was not there when information about the key role of language in education first appeared in the 1980s.

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CurricuLanguage supports existing reform models

Two large targets of educational reform are instruction for students from poverty homes and instruction to meet the demands of the 21st century. These two merge into a third target, which is educational reform to help students from poverty homes meet the demands of the 21st century. This is a tall order! Luckily, there is help in the form of books, seminars and other instructional media.

Instruction of students from poverty homes requires a shift to the positive for families, teachers and children. An important shift in focus is away from the deficit model of what disadvantaged children lack. It's being replaced by a more dynamic model that strives to pinpoint exactly what disadvantaged students require in order to succeed. Not surprisingly, the attitudes that surround doing well in school lay the groundwork for future school success. Maeroff (1998) looks at the need for LSES students to have a stronger support system. Among the areas to be impacted by this support system are:

- A sense of well-being.
- A sense of academic initiative.

Similarly, Bempechat (1998) found that attitude and confidence were an important component of success for those at-risk students who achieved academically "against the odds." Attitude is also an important aspect of Kovalik's Integrated Thematic Instruction (1993) and the related "absence of threat" in the student's learning environment.

So, disadvantaged students who feel better about themselves and learning are better able to take advantage of learning opportunities that are presented, and a key way to build in positive attitudes is to build in early student success. A CurricuLanguage approach helps to attain the necessary early success by keeping classroom LIL expectations at the level of the student's LIS. By gradually decontextualizing classroom activities, teachers can keep children succeeding from the first day of school onward.

Teaching for the 21st century requires a constructivist perspective. As educators, we are facing the urgency of a new task: we must learn to educate "for the unknown" (Lane, 1998). Without knowing what our students will face as adults, we must provide them with the best tools possible for evaluating alternatives, making decisions and interacting collaboratively and productively. A good way to focus on the importance of this goal is to remember that the students we educate today will be the policy makers and voters who decide our fates in 30 to 40 years. What skills and values will we want the decision makers to have when age-related infirmities make us dependent on societal wisdom?

The constructivist viewpoint is helpful as a guide to the kinds of quality classroom interactions that will prepare children to make important future decisions. Basic to this approach are activities that lead students to construct their own knowledge, to make discoveries and connections, and to communicate those new findings. From the constructivist perspective, language learning and content learning become remarkably similar processes, requiring the same types of facilitation in order to take place. Clay (1998) advocates interacting with the "constructivist child":

> Two decades of research on language acquisition left us with excellent descriptions of how a child learns to speak, and with the conviction that young children work out what they need to

> learn in order to be understood without direct teaching but through negotiations of meaning that take place in conversations. The miracle of language acquisition occurs as parents and siblings who know the individual well talk with the individual child. Nothing like the "group delivery" of the classroom occurs. From those interactions, children take what they want, constructing their own cognitive competencies. Conversations that negotiate meaning provide a starting point for thinking about how to improve teaching interactions in classrooms, displacing much current and unsatisfactory teacher talk. We must learn how to enlist the constructiveness of children in the interests of their own progress, and having done this we need to know how to pass the initiative to learners so they can be on their own much of the time and do without us as teacher (p. 215).

The CurricuLanguage Levels provide a guide for which activities to offer at which times in order to assist children in building their own ways to meet self-imposed thinking and interaction demands.

New opportunities for using a CurricuLanguage approach to support reform in education is the first reason for writing about CurricuLanguage now. The second reason is the need for quality information about language and learning to guide decisions about educational practices, especially those practices which are recommended for LSES children.

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Accountability-the-Rotten

Accountability, expressed as a quest for improved standardized assessment scores above all other indicators of quality, can suck out any existing language-building opportunities. This happens when the selected reform procedures fail to protect student opportunities to negotiate meaning. In a nearby district, for example, instructional aides who had been facilitating student-initiated conversations were reassigned to drill card duty. All day, every day, all year, they drilled students in answers to the questions similar to those known to be on the standardized test. Did the students show a gain on the standardized test? You bet they did! Did they develop their LIS to meet increasing LIL demand? Nope.

Accountability-the-Rotten reduces important teacher autonomy

Talented teachers, left on their own, provide increased classroom conversations. Teachers watch students and notice what works with them; they modify group instruction in favor of cooperative learning interactions; they attend workshops on using art media to teach content; they buy books and materials from personal budgets. They actively search for ways to meet the learning needs of their young students from poverty homes. When they identify something that works, they continue to use it. When something does not work, they discard it. They and their students work together to negotiate a classroom environment that over time more closely matches student needs.

Without specific protection for this level of autonomy and the resulting language-building experiences, it can be washed away by imposed top-down reform procedures. A set of procedures put in place to help students can actually shut down classroom language learning if essential

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opportunities to negotiate meaning are removed. Without evidence to the contrary, district administrators may feel that student needs are being met.

The CurricuLanguage Model offers one way to collect this important evidence to the contrary. By documenting student LIS and growth of student LIS during the school year, educators can evaluate the impact of various reform procedures. Increase on standardized test scores can be compared with increase in student LIS. *A quality reform program should show an increase in student LIS as well as in standardized scores.* An increase in student LIS represents important student growth in the capacity to utilize future educational experiences. An increase in standardized scores in the absence of LIS increase represents a short-term advance at the expense of more lasting gains.

Accountability-the-Rotten favors an educational model over a developmental model

Two phases of a young human's learning career are developmental learning and educational learning. Although there may be some overlap, success in educational learning is dependent on previous achievement in the developmental learning phase. The contrast between these two types of learning is outlined in the chart below:

Models of Education

Developmental Model	Educational Model
* Child in charge	* Teacher in charge
* Curiosity-driven	* Discipline-driven
* Requires excitement	* Requires attention
* Want to learn	* Have to learn
* Divergent activities	* Convergent activities
* Process evaluation	* Product evaluation
* Model is seed growing	* Model is factory product

Developmental learning comes first. From birth on, the developmental learner is going about the business of responding to internal mandates to figure things out. A child learns to walk, talk and problem solve largely through interest-driven interactions with the environment. Although the quality of the environment can affect developmental learning, forces external to the child cannot dictate that learning take place or order the appearance of new skills. The child is pretty much in charge of developmental learning. The child follows natural curiosity, interest and excitement into self-designed learning activities. Developmental learning activities are divergent: different children engaging in the same activity (exploring materials, for example) can be learning different things. Traditional developmental learning environments, such as quality preschools, are evaluated to determine if the environment is adequate. The assumption made by this process evaluation is that if the maximum conditions for learning are provided, then the

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learner will learn at maximum capacity. Just like a seed going through the process of sprouting, the developmental learner is in charge of his or her own learning.

Educational learning is dependent on the skills acquired through developmental learning. By contrast, the educational learner responds to a teacher-selected set of goals and activities. Even though curricular content can be presented with developmental activities (Charbonneau & Reider, 1995), traditional methods for teaching reading, writing, math and science are organized for the educational learner. If what is being taught is not of immediate interest, the educational learner imposes a self-discipline in order to focus attention on the material he or she has to learn. Educational learning activities are largely convergent; students with a variety of interests and talents apply themselves to a single narrow task. The evaluation of educational learning is often product-oriented. Similar to a factory process, outcomes such as test performance are documented. The assumption made by this product evaluation is that if the results are of high quality, then the process preceding the results must be of high quality.

The educational learner evolves from the developmental learner. Early experiences with child-driven learning activities give way over time to acceptance of teacher-selected activities. The time period for this transition is somewhere between the ages of five and eight. Ideally, this transition is gradual as a skilled teacher blends developmental and educational activities.

Accountability-the-Rotten does not recognize the developmental learner. In some cases, the focus on narrowly defined outcomes, such as colors, numbers or letters, can lead to the use of educational as opposed to developmental learning methods before they are helpful. The requirement that young children demonstrate competency in specific outcomes has the potential to subvert the child's developmental learning process. While individuals in a quality preschool program recognize that a child will demonstrate listed competencies as the result of appropriate developmental opportunities, others less knowledgeable about young children may shift to an educational approach in an attempt to "teach" specified outcomes. Without clear-cut methods and goals that show how children can progress in a developmental approach, quality teachers may be pressured to shift from interactions that work to interactions that look like they should work, but don't.

CurricuLanguage offers those clear-cut methods and goals to teachers Pre-K through Grade 2 by starting with a developmental approach and transitioning to an educational one. The RED/1 and YELLOW/2 Levels consist of developmental activities of exploration and discovery. At GREEN/3, children begin following teacher-directed activities and by BLUE/4, they are capable of meeting the full range of expectations imposed by an educational approach.

Accountability-the-Rotten favors behaviorism over constructivism

Behaviorism assumes the student is a passive recipient of information. Behaviorism provides a road map for viewing the process of making changes. Through careful control of events that take place prior to a desired behavior (called the antecedents) and events that take place after a desired behavior (called the consequents), a behavior can be either increased or reduced by the person controlling the events (called the teacher). The reasonable educator, while finding many positive

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applications for behaviorist approaches, will also run into its major limitation, the assumption that the only information of worth is that which the teacher has and can transmit to students. The teacher is viewed as all-knowing and the student is viewed as the passive recipient of the teacher information.

Constructivism supports an active student role. Constructivism acknowledges the active nature of learning. The student is viewed as a partner in the process of creating a personal viewpoint of the world. This viewpoint becomes increasingly complex as the student activates cognitive structures. The student's knowledge in an area may exceed that of the teacher's. The teacher role is to encourage the process of learning and, ideally, to model it (Wells, 1986).

Accountability-the-Rotten risks freezing young LSES children into behaviorist educational models while MSES children explore constructivist developmental opportunities. Documented practices of giving LSES children rote memory tasks while leading MSES students through the development of thinking and higher-order skills has led to previous concern about the differences in quality of educational experiences (Levine, 1988). With the pressure of tests that assess information that can be memorized, LSES children may be locked into the behaviorist approach to education delivered through an educational model. These were not the skills needed for the last part of the 20th century and certainly will have low value in the 21st century. The greatest risk from Accountability-the-Rotten, then, is that it will actually increase the divide between rich kids and poor kids. While MSES schools will be freed, by higher standardized scores, to experiment with newer 21st century approaches and interactions, the LSES schools will not have this same teaching freedom. Darling-Hammond (1997), noting this phenomenon in a large urban district, commented, "As is often true, the most counterproductive approaches were enforced most rigidly in the schools serving the most disadvantaged students who most needed responsive teaching" (p. 50). Accountability-the-Rotten will end up creating what accountability was designed to prevent: low quality educational experiences for LSES children.

This is a problem far beyond the capabilities of CurricuLanguage to address in any comprehensive manner. It was here before the new push for accountability and it will likely maintain for quite a while. However, CurricuLanguage does offer teachers of young children from poverty homes a way to "harness the constructivist learner" (Clay, 1998). By plugging into the language learning capabilities of young learners and keeping the language demands at acceptable levels, teachers can guide LSES children into 21st century learning activities.

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Where Do I Start?

Perhaps the greatest hope is that classes using a CurricuLanguage approach could leapfrog from frustrating interactions typical of the 20th century to teaching methods exemplifying the newest reforms and the recommended teaching appropriate for the 21st century. Rather than focusing on what's wrong or missing, teachers can provide students with "a clear blueprint for the acquisition of 'life skills' based on what works for effective learners" (Groeber, 1999, p. xii).

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Teachers can also begin to consciously shed the "ubiquitous genre of triadic dialogue (Teacher Initiation, Student Response, Teacher Follow-up)," described by Wells (1999, p. xvii), and can work to infuse classes with more lively discourse. Classes for young children from poverty homes can cease being conceptual ghettos where children, walled off from newer teaching strategies, are relentlessly confronted with what they don't know, can't do, and don't care about. Instead, these classes can become places where learning and the learner are celebrated; where skilled teachers scaffold the intellectual growth of young children by talking them through thought processes; where children astound and delight adults and each other with their facility at learning and facile comprehension of important underlying principles.

These changes can start quietly and in a small way, with a commitment tomorrow to give information instead of ask questions and to watch the results. Maybe the next day or week could include some observations of students leading to thoughts about possible language levels. The following week could have some discovery activities or some methods for scaffolding comprehension.

A way to document growth in LIS could add important information. A method for matching LIS and LIL could lead to dramatically effective activities. Day by day and week by week, pieces can fall into place. Students can begin connecting to material with more confidence and increased enthusiasm for school. This is something within your grasp.

Dr. Mary B. Lane (1998, p. 95) reminds us:

> No challenge is greater than opening doors to children whose lives are constricted by where and how they live, the quality of parenting they are given, and the risks they must run to survive. What kind of people are qualified to open the doors for all children? You are!

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